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THE WHITE HERMIT.

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Benjamin Cooper

1872



THE
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OR,
THE UNKNOWN FOE
A ROMANCE OF THE LAKES AND WOODS.

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THE WHITE HERMIT.

CHAPTER I.

THE LADY OF THE LAKE.

"TAKE that, you obstinate scoundrel?" shouted an angry voice.

A splash in the water disturbed the silence about a wooded lake, in the midst of wild and beautiful scenery. Such a lake as those of that romantic chain in central New York, but which, under the axes of the sturdy pioneer, have lost much of their picturesque character. The surface was covered by a host of loons, divers and geese, while here and there a stately crane stalked through the reeds along the banks, stooping now and then to seize a water-snake, wriggling by. A small stream of pure bright water poured down a mountain gorge and lost itself in the placid waters of the lake.

The splash in the water caused the loons and divers to disappear as if by magic beneath the tranquil surface, and the next moment a man's head appeared above the element into which he had plunged. He blew the water from his mouth, turned a puzzled and angry face toward the shore, and swam inward. Just then another man appeared upon the bank above, flushed and angry, muttering curses against the man in the water.

"What did ye do that fur?" gasped the involuntary bather, as his feet struck bottom, and his head and shoulders stood out a few inches from the surface of the water. "Do you think I'm going to stand it?"

"You just come ashore and I'll chuck you in again, you born idiot," replied the man on the bank.

"What did I do?" whined the man in the water. "Come, don't be violent, Capt'in Larry. I won't say it ag'in."

"Then come out. But remember, you are upon your good behavior."

"I won't forget," replied the unfortunate bather. "You're so darned quick with your hands that a man don't have half a chance with you. Dot rot a man that's got such a temper as you! I wouldn't have it for all the world."

"If Hungry Bill don't hurry out he won't get out at all," said the man called Captain Larry, coming further out upon the bank."

Hungry Bill obeyed quickly, in evident fear of the threat, and climbed the low bank of the lake, shaking himself like a Newfoundland dog when emerging from the water. He was a broad-shouldered, lean, white-haired man, perhaps twenty-five years of age, with a pair of legs which were marvels of length and thinness. He was dressed in a greasy suit of homespun, which had once been green, but which age and use had robbed of its original color, until it appeared to be of a dirty brown. His tailor could not have been an artist, for the long arms of this specimen protruded at least six inches below the sleeves of the coat, and a section of filthy stockings appeared below, while a yawning gulf displayed itself between the waist-coat and unmentionables. Further adorned by a tattered pair of moccasins, and a coon-skin cap of dubious look, "Hungry Bill Epps" stood confessed.

His companion was a man a year or two older than himself, the beau ideal of a forest ranger. He wore the neat uniform of the Colonial Rifles—a corps much esteemed for soldierly qualities—with the exception of the cap; which was, like that of his companion, of coon-skin, with the difference in favor of cleanliness, and having three barred tails upon the side, while Hungry Bill's cap displayed one dejected appendage, limp and ragged. A look at the face of the soldier would have been sufficient for any man of honor, for it was a face to command esteem—open, frank and handsome. His hair, worn long after the fashion of the day, was suffered to fall unrestrained upon his shoulders in dark, curling masses. He wore mustaches, of a rich, dark color, and when he smiled revealed a line of white teeth which added to the charm of his face. His figure was perfection, just above the middle height, straight as a cedar, with long, sinewy arms and broad shoulders. A black belt

encircled his waist, in which a pair of handsome pistols were thrust, beside a long, silver-hilted dagger. He wore also a short cut-and-thrust sword, with a richly-chased scabbard, and hilt like the dagger. In his right hand, the butt resting on the ground, he held a heavy rifle.

"Now, Hungry Bill," said the young soldier, "listen to me, and see that you pay due heed to my words. Do you know any thing of a stranger, said to lead the life of a recluse upon an island in the lake yonder?"

"Capt'in Larry—" began Hungry Bill.

"I believe I shall have to give you another souse," said Larry. "What makes you hang fire in that way?"

"Cause I've got *principles!*" roared Bill. "Cause I've give my word, and swore by the big horn spoon I wouldn't take nobody to the island, nor tell 'em a thing about the island. Now, see here, Capt'in Larry Austen, I've thought many a time I'd part comp'ny with you and I find no time so good as the present. Let's agree to quit."

"In other words you propose to discharge me from your service?" said Captain Austen, laughing.

"Leastways in a contrary sense," replied Hungry Bill. "You let the island alone, can't you? You ain't got no call to go that, I opinonate."

"But, I propose to go there this very day. And further, I propose that you shall take me there in your canoe. What do you mean by this nonsense? I know as well as you do that some one inhabits the island, and do you think I would go there to do them harm, you blockhead?"

"Who said there was anybody thar?" growled Hungry Bill.

"*You did.*"

"*I didn't.*"

"*I say you did.*"

"*And I say you lie!*"

Captain Austen made a bound at Bill and grasped him by the shoulder, while he uttered a cry of dismay, and clasped his arms around a small tree which grew upon the bank. Austen tugged at him in vain, for nothing would make him loose his hold. As the captain was pulling at him with might and main, Bill's strength suddenly gave way, and both men went down into the clear water of the lake with a resounding

splash. The *contretemps* was so sudden, and the retribution so just, that even in the act of falling, Captain Austen laughed aloud. The laugh was brought to a sudden termination by a rush of cold water. He released his hold of Hungry Bill, and stood up as soon as he could, and the pair stood facing each other in about three feet of cold water, two of the most ridiculous looking objects in the good colony of New York. As they stood there, a merry laugh sounded in their ears, and a boat shot out of a little sheltered cove near at hand, and passed within a few yards of them, the occupant singing a merry song, evidently reflecting upon the unfortunate predicament of the captain. Austen turned, and saw the boat not twenty yards away.

"Ha! ha! ha!" rung out the sweet, clear voice. "The biter is bit! Remember the old proverb, *mon beau capitaine*."

"The deuce!" muttered the captain. "Bill, who is that?"

But the oracle was mute. Climbing out of the water, he sat down on the bank, looking at the boat, which lay lightly upon the surface of the lake, not moving except as the slight wind touched it.

"A pair of impromptu bathers," cried the occupant of the boat, turning her face toward the shore. "Alas, poor gentlemen! I fear you are very wet."

"Madame," said Austen, "I shall esteem it the greatest pleasure of my life if this wetting shall give me the great honor of your acquaintance."

"But, unfortunately," said the lady, "it will not do any thing of the kind. I do not propose to make myself acquainted with you, and I already have your name, as you see."

Austen looked hard at the boat and said nothing. A woman, and one evidently young, occupied the light craft. She was dressed in a garb suited to a forest life, although it was of rich material. A sort of kirtle, of strong blue broadcloth, reached nearly to the knee, set out by skirts with a red border, which showed below the kirtle and reached to the knee. A pair of Turkish trowsers were fastened at the ankle by small silver buckles, and her feet were covered by dainty moccasins, worked with a skillful hand. Her hair was of a rich brown color, and she wore a Scotch bonnet of blue cloth, with a plaid border, which gave her a jaunty air that was quite enchanting.

Her hands were small and delicate, though somewhat browned by exposure to the sun. Her face was cut in a beautiful riddle, firm lips, a delicate mouth, and cheeks in which the faintest peach-blush was revealed, while her teeth were like pearls. Austin stood spell-bound, gazing at this beautiful girl, and wondering from whence she came, while Hungry Bill sat upon the bank, whistling, and eying the lady furtively.

"Bill Epps," said the lady, suddenly addressing him.

Bill started as if a shot had struck him. "Yes, miss," he said. "I didn't tell a word, and no more I won't. He shall cut me into inch pieces first."

"You are a noble fellow, Bill," said the lady. "In spite of your homely face and figure, you have the heart of a hero, and would not try to intrude your presence where it is not desired, as this gentleman would do."

"Lady," said the captain, who was standing upon the narrow belt of sand which ran along below the bank, "listen to me. I am not a man to persecute a lady. Say to me that you desire me to keep away from yonder island, and I will do so, upon one condition."

"And that condition, sir?"

"That I may be called upon the first sign of danger to you and yours."

"No danger can come to us here, sir," replied the lady. "Who would do injury to those who offend no man, and only seek to end their lives in peace and quiet in this desolate spot?"

"You do not know the subtlety of the Indian, or his innate cruelty," replied the captain. "It would be enough for him to know that you have white blood in your veins, and then he would destroy you. I know that bands of Indians are already on the war-path, and that there is danger to the outlying settlers."

"There is no danger to me or mine," replied the lady.

"But promise me this. You seem to know my namesake, Bill Epps, and trust in him. A rough Mercury, but honest and bold of courage enough when need be. If you are in danger, give Bill Epps the word, and he will pass it to me, and if I am above the earth you shall have aid."

Something in the chivalrous bearing of the young man

touched the lady, for she looked at him with a less careless manner, evidently pleased by his profuse of friendliness.

"I thank you, sir?" she said, softly. "I happen to have known your controversy with Bill Epps, and I am not allowed to tell any thing of the secret which by accident was told in his keeping. I thought you one of those men who, though carelessly, wished to penetrate the secret of the place. Do you promise that, except I am in real danger, you will not follow me?"

"It is a hard condition," he replied. "But—you have my promise."

"Thanks. Then you have mine as well. When I am in danger I will send Bill Epps to you, and claim your promise so nobly given. I must now bid you good-day."

"Will you not even treat me with your name?" he said.

"Your question is answered by this. Call me Perdita. One name is as good as another to me. And since I have lost all, friends, name, and station, there is no better name than that. Perdita let it be."

"But—"

"One thing more. Do not question Epps. If I know any thing of his character, he would not reveal any thing he knows, if laid upon live coals."

"Bet yer life," muttered Bill.

The head of the boat swung swiftly round, then dropped into the water, and, like a bird seeking its nest, took its way toward the rocky island in the distance. A jutting point a little from view, still paddling with a practiced hand, looking back at the pair, white, with the water dripping from his drenched clothing, Captain Lawrence Austin stood upon the narrow sand beach, like Niobe, the picture of woe.

Who was this strange girl, who called her friend a man, and went like a vision? Why had she trusted in Bill Epps—Hungry Bill, the butt of the girls—when she would not trust in the leader of fashion in his own place in Albany, and the brother of Lelia's heart's desire the Marquis de St. Regis? Captain Austin was known far and wide as

gallant Indian-fighter and was distinguished for every amounting almost to madness, when in the face of the enemy. His present expedition had led him through this session, and his mission was to discover whether the Indians were really upon the war-path, and to what extent the Six Nations were disaffected, as it had been whispered that the Oneidas were but ordinary messengers from the French. With this sum, doth this story has nothing to do, further than to explain the presence of this young man in this wild region, with but a single companion.

Hungry Bill still sat upon the bank, knocking his heels in a disconsolate manner against the stones, and looking after the disappearing boat. As it reached the point, he gave a sigh of pleasure, and then took up his tune just where he left it off.

"How came you to know that this beautiful girl made this like her lover?" said Austen, taking a seat beside him.

Bill looked at him in a reproachful manner, and passed his hand over his nose, very much as a man does who thinks his nose is bleeding and is disappointed.

"You heard me, Bill?" said Austen.

"Now, that won't do, you know, capt'in," replied Bill, in the same mournful tone. "You know it won't. It's a good plant, but what's the use? I ain't book-learn', or any thing of that sort, but I know how to keep my tongue between my teeth, and I mean to do it."

"You are determined to tell me nothing of this lady who calls herself Padita?" said Austen. "Then your pretended attachment to me is all a sham."

"Attachment be darned!" said Bill. "I ain't got nothin' to say to that. I promised not to tell any thing about the Ke-le-ah, and I guess I'll keep my word."

"Of course, of course. I did not wish to worm your secret out of you, Bill," said Austen. "Only I would give my comandion to know about this lady and where she lives."

"You couldn't give it to me," said Bill; "so it don't matter. Now, then, hadn't we better attend to business, unless you'd like to sling me into the water ag'in. Suit yourself; I ain't particular, nolow."

"Pshaw. You know how hasty I am, Bill."

"Rayther hasty, I allow. Waal, ain't we ag'in' to eat nothin' to-day?"

"Eat! Do you want to eat again? Where does all your food go?"

"That's an open question. I'm hungry ag'in. I seem to be hungry all the time. Jest wait a bit."

CHAPTER II.

FOUR TO ONE.

HUNGRY BILL took up his haversack, which, luckily for him, had been lying on the ground during his controversy with the captain, and unclipping the buck'e drew out an instant piece of bacon and a piece of corn bread, of corresponding size. Then, sitting upon a log, with the bread in one hand and the bacon in the other, he began to eat in a manner which spoke well for his gastronomic powers, but would have carried desolation into the soul of the man who was forced to feed him. The captain looked on with a smile, and Bill watched him in a half-apologetic way as he took a large, semicircular bite out of the bacon, with his head very much on one side.

Our captain looked on in silent admiration, until repose took place, and Hungry Bill, hungry no more for the present, lecked up his haversack and slung it over his shoulder. The captain picked up his rifle, slipped a back-skin sheath over his coat to keep it dry, and signaled to his companion to follow him, which he did at the long leap peculiar to the Indians. To the white man who passes his life in the woods, the Indian was moody, for he was thinking of the lady of his choice, and her strange place of residence. They crossed them beside the lake, hidden at times from their view by some projecting headland, and again shining like stars through the leaves. A strange sound disturbed the silence at once, and Bill Epps paused, holding up his hand as a signal to his companion. What was the sound? A clink of steel and a hurried tramp of feet in a little glen a few

paces to the right. Beckoning to his companion to follow his example, the young guide took the cover from his rifle, and changed from the hungry, careless boy, to the woodman wild for battle. His gray eyes flashed, and his step was that of the panther creeping on his prey.

Hush!

The click of steel became louder as they advanced, and mingled with it came a hurried breathing as of men in deadly conflict. Bill Epps parted the bushes with his left hand, holding his rifle ready in the other, and peeped in. Captain Austen did the same and saw who made the noise which had turned them from their course. Three Indians, in the dress of the St. Regis of the Lakes, were assailing a single warrior, whose dress, and the war-eagle on his naked breast, told that he was one of the great Oneida nation. He stood with one foot thrown backward, bearing his weight upon it, like a tiger ready for a spring, holding in one hand a heavy tomahawk, already dyed by the blood of his enemies, and in the other a long knife purpled to the hilt. Austen could not repress a start of surprise and admiration at the noble figure of the young Indian. Standing nearly six feet in height, with muscular shoulders, powerful limbs, and brawny hands, he was a picture of forest comeliness. His dress was of buck-skin, ornamented by beads in fanciful figures, in which the Indian women so excel. These workings were the totems of the tribe, the eagle, and the lesser totems handed down from time immemorial to the people of the Six Nations. His opponents were strong and wiry men, the pick of a nation at all times warlike and aggressive, whose eyes sparkled with rage as they struck again and again at the resolute figure of the Oneida, who, with a smile upon his lips, even in the face of such fearful odds, warded off their blows. At his feet, with a gory mark upon his forehead where that terrible hatchet had fallen, lay a lone Indian, and over his body his comrades pushed forward to avenge him. All had paused a moment by mutual consent, for two of the St. Regis were wounded and the third still breathless, while the Oneida, unwounded, calm, and unflinching, stood like a statue carved in bronze, with that smile upon his dark face.

"Children of the St. Regis!" he cried, as they bent forward with leveled weapons, "what art thou, to be the leader, though young, of the great nation of the Ojibways? A child of the tribe would I teach if only for a St. Regis, and I will go on the war trail, and I would take their leader home to lie in her wigwam. Go; I seek not you, and that my mission is one of peace."

"Let the Ojibway sing his death song," replied the un wounded St. Regis, waving his knife before him. "It shall be all the man who has shed the blood of Pascagoula. The warrior who lies at your feet, live to go back to his village, to teach of what he has done? No; Canzato is a great leader; his hand shall avenge the dead Pascagoula."

"Dog of a St. Regis," replied the young chief, flinging his bloody weapons above his head, "I am a wild pony. I would not quarrel with the St. Regis today, but not to-morrow still I am. I see visions of blood and death; three red devils in the sky which hang over the St. Regis hills, which will not go away. But they are growing darker. They are for Pascagoula, for behold! I give him to you, and the sun will pass away."

The only reply was a sudden and terrible yell from the moment bore the single man back, and the terrible struggle recommenced. Although upon his back, the white chief, desperate as yet upon three sides, was still unconquerable. The young man was wounded in the left shoulder. Still, in a desperate blow at the man on his right hand, he would suddenly upon Canzato, beat down his spear, and strike him below the body of Pascagoula. But, in doing this, he had exposed himself to the blows of the other two, and they rushed in together. But, to their utter surprise, the spear struck him. The blow, the chief dropped as if he had been struck by lightning, and the two St. Regis stood silent, a instant, in their mad haste, and each of them slightly wounded the other with his knife, while the Ojibway was on foot again, looking at them with a calm smile of derision!

Their rage knew no bounds now, and it was a matter of life or death to them. Either they or the Ojibway must fall down, and, gathering all their remaining strength, they rushed at him again. Wounded, bleeding rapidly, and fatigued by

the Ironclad. He combated with such stupendous force, that he gave Vanwall with a disorientation and half-windedness of his life's effort. His long eyes looked from side to side, and he seemed to have no time to think, so intent was he to save himself. But all his efforts could not keep him from his master, and he was wounded. In the end the Ironclad gained the victory. D'Artagnan only escaped him.

D'Artagnan hardly recovered, he ran the gauntlet, and the St. R. is stored in prison. One way we would like to say could not keep up with the other, and a little over twenty feet soon separated them. The Ironclad turned out of the battle-ground, but recollection of it, suddenly with the desire of saving his master. His real desire however appeared soon. It was like the old battle between the Horati and Curci in the old Roman days, when Horatius saved Roma from Alba. As soon as the two St. R. is were sufficiently separated, they came to me like a tiger and pounced upon him. Vanwall struck him in the wounded place of his shoulder. As the two Ironclads approached, and in the confusion fell before the inevitable grasp of the old friend, he fell forward, the two were back to back, and grappled in the sandy soil.

It was a scene worthy a painter's pencil. There fell about them a score men, wounded in half a dozen places, their heads dropping to every position, never the sight of flight. In this struggle, Vanwall seized his opponent by the wrist of his left hand and dropped him, broken and beaten, upon a quantity of brown and muddy sand. But that the Ironclad kept up. He had his opponent, the latter would have been of short duration, although the St. R. is was by far the stronger of the two combatants, and the young chieftain. But the latter had the latter had his hand held back in the wrist, and was held fast, and dashed over his head, straight upon the ground. He fell, and he never overcame his enemy at once, or not at all. The fierce battle was entertained in an enclosure which realized the thought of Byron :

"Friends meet to part, love laughs at faith,
True foes, once met, are joined till death."

The final destruction of the desperate force ended in the ears of Lauretta Aragon. When he was on the point of

rushing out to the aid of the noble young Oneida, but as often had been restrained by the hand of Bill Epps.

"Let him alone," whispered the guide. "I knew the chief, and he would think it an insult if you went to help him now. Oh, ain't he just glorious!"

"Noble fellow!" said the captain. "He must not be overcome."

When the young chief apparently turned to fly, Austin raised his rifle, but once more the guide held him back. "Don't do it," he said. "I smell a trick here. You will see in a moment. Ha! look at that! Down he goes!"

The last exclamation was elicited when the Oneida turned upon his pursuers and struck the foremost to the earth. The close grapple with the fourth followed, and Bill Epps thought it time to act. Drawing his knife from his belt, he darted from the thicket to the side of the combatants, when one of them released his knife-hand and struck a terrible blow. The next instant the Oneida rose to his feet, reeling, and looking fiercely at Bill Epps through a bloody mist, which seemed to hang before his eyes.

"Come on!" he murmured. "An Oneida never yields."

As he spoke, he tottered like a pine before the ax of the woodman, and Bill Epps caught him in his arms and laid him gently down, shouting for his companion:

"Here, capt'in! Hurry up. Don't ask any questions, but work. Tear off that calico huntin'-shirt from yon dead Injun, and tear it into strips. This poor fellow has got it bad."

"Do you know him?"

"Know him? I guess I do. Why, it is young Chetanjo, called 'the generous' among the Oneidas."

"Is it possible? The very man I came to see," said Austin, anxiously.

"Yes, and the best friend we have among the Oneidas, next to the chief sachem. This yer young 'un can draw all the young braves with him, and he always takes them to our side. Here, don't be afraid to tear that shirt. That feller won't get mad; he ain't on it. This is a bad cut in the arm, ha! Jinks! I'm afraid I can't do it up right. Take my cap on and run to the lake for some water. Be spry."

The white-haired guide seemed to have changed places with

the captain, and the officer did not dispute with him, but snatching up the canteen ran with it to the lake at his best speed and returned in a moment. The guide washed out the worst cut Chenango had received, that upon the wrist, and bound it tightly after applying a compress to the upper part of the forearm to stop the flow of blood. It was all he could do under the circumstances, and then he attended to the other wounds, which were of less importance.

"I wish I knowed how to take up that little artery," muttered the guide, nervously. "It ain't done right, I know. But low the deuce can I help it? Wait; hooray! Jest you stay here, cap'na, and see that the compress don't slip off, and wait for me. I'll be back in half an hour."

"Where are you going?"

"No matter. You wait."

He started off at a run, and the young man could hear his rapid feet going back over the ground they had so lately traversed. What did it mean? Why had their guide left them so suddenly? He could only wait for events to shape themselves. Sitting down by the side of the insensible Indian he bathed his forehead with water, and soon after was rewarded, for he uttered a deep sigh, and then regained his consciousness, and looked with a start of surprise at the figure of the white man sitting by him.

"Who is this?" he said. "Did the St. Regis conquer Chenango in the battle? Then let him die."

"No, no," replied the white man, gratified that the Indian could speak the English language. "Do not fear. You were the victor."

"It is good," said the savage. "But why is this? I am weak; I feel like a little child which lies upon its mother's breast."

"You have lost much blood, and Bill Epps has gone for some one to help you."

A smile broke over the face of the Indian at the mention of the name, but the effort to speak was too much for him, and he again fainted. The young captain looked with a pitying eye upon the strong young frame beneath him, and thought with wonder of the strange victory he had achieved over four strong men eager for his blood.

The half-hour passed, and the young man began to be impatient, when he heard the sound of faint steps, and springing to his feet, grasping his rifle. He was reassured the instant moment, for he saw the cragged cap of Hanzy Bill, peering above the bushes, and he stepped into the circle, which followed by a man advanced in life, with a long, grey beard, an erect, slightly hunched, and deep-set eye. There was something in this old man, found so strangely in this savage wilderness, which reminded the young captain of some one he had seen, but where he could not tell. Who was he?

CHAPTER III.

THE MASKED CHIEF.

The stranger, without question, walked with a stately step to the side of the Indian, and kneeling upon the earth, laid upon the ground a silver-inlaid box, which, when opened, revealed a case of surgical instruments, carefully preserved and ready for instant use. Raising the arm of the wounded man, he looked at the precautions taken by the guide with a sad smile which well became his noble face.

"Your compress has done its work well, Epie," he said. "It has stopped the bleeding, and but for that, by this time my skill would have been of but little use. The Osiris may thank you for a life preserved, not me. I shall only compliment your good work."

He went to work like a master of surgery, and with a quickness and delicacy of touch which was wonderful. He took up the severed artery and bandaged the arm neatly and quickly. This done, he rose to his feet, just as the Indian came to his senses.

"He must not remain here," he said. "Even at the risk of discovery, I must take him to a place of safety. Can you two carry him to the boat?"

Hanzy Bill made a signal to his captain, and the two bore the heavy body of the Indian in their arms and carried him

down to the beach. Here, drawn up on the shingle sand, was the flat boat in which the lady who called herself Perita was seen that morning. The stranger stooped and removed two of the forward thwarts, so that they could lay the patient in the boat.

"You must leave your comrade here, Epps," said the stranger. "I beg your pardon, sir, but for reasons I cannot explain, I must beg of you not to go with us, but to remain where you are for the present. As soon as we have placed this noble Indian in a place of safety, Epps shall return."

"I am only grieved that you will not trust me as well as my pink?" replied the young captain. "But let it be as you say."

"Epps has already gained possession of my secret," replied the stranger. "In what manner I need not say. He has kept that secret nobly, even in the face of persecution, and I regard him as my best, I had almost said my only, friend in this colony."

"Git out," said Epps, brutally. "I ain't done anythin' to you, but you just wait til I git a canoe, and if I don't help you then I'm a sucker."

"I can trust you," replied the old gentleman, quickly. "You know I trust you. At some future day, sir, perhaps I may be able to explain to you why I am a banished man in this wild country; not now, not now."

Epps took his place at the oar; the gentleman—for a gentleman he undoubtedly was—stepped into the boat, and took his seat upon the tranquil surface of the lake, scattering the tiny, watery bubbles from it, leaving Captain Austin standing upon the narrow belt of sand along the water's edge. Who was this strange old man, who came like a specter? And whence? Why had he treated Epps, as the ruffian did? and how had the police been able to find him so quickly?

The boat, under the steady strokes of the oars in the hands of Bill Epps, passed out of sight behind the same headland near which he had last seen the lady, and Lawrence Austin felt a deep feeling of uneasiness come upon him, such as he had never felt before. He was alone—alone in the deeper part of Lake Michigan, over which he could not

ps, behind him the limitless forest and the bodies of the dead St. Regis. From whence had these savages come, and what were they doing in this country, the home of their inveterate foes, the Oneidas? They certainly must have come up in some secret and important expedition, or they would not be here. It was evident that their meeting with the Oneida had been purely an accident, and that their natural hatred of his tribe had induced them to assail him.

As he stood there, ruminating upon the strange events which the day had brought, there pealed out in the woods behind him a cry which, once heard, is never forgotten, and he had heard it too often in battle to make any mistake in it now. The mournful, wailing, tremulous cry could be nothing else than the note which an Indian raises over the bier of his own nation found upon the trail. The sound came from the spot where the dead warriors lay. The St. Regis had found their dead!

Laurence Austen was no coward. A soldier by profession, he knew what it was to be in danger, and that never in his life had he been in greater peril than now. He felt a strange thrill as that sudden cry announced to him the coming of the savages, and he looked about him for a hiding place. He knew that the Indians would not hesitate long before following the trail, which they had taken no pains to conceal. The discovery of the bodies was followed by angry exclamations and cries for vengeance, apparently from many throats, until a commanding voice was heard rising above the din of the savages; a great silence fell, and the young man knew that they had found the trail. There was only one way by which he might escape. Stepping on stones to hide his trail, he passed some distance, and then clasped the trunk of a large beech tree six feet from the ground, and climbing rapidly, hid himself in the branches just as the foremost savages appeared upon the bank below, and then leaped down upon the earth. He was followed by others, some of whom remained upon the bank, looking down upon the branch, while others joined their companions below. Austen was familiar enough with Indian customs to know that these were of the same tribe as those slain by Chenango—the St. Regis, ever the faithful allies of the French. They were uttering low cries of disappointment

and rage, as they saw by the marks on the sand that their enemies not only had a boat, but had disappeared.

"Ugh!" said one tall fellow, in a fanciful dress, speaking in the Indian tongue. "Shall the blood of our brothers cry to us out of the earth in vain? Have these murderers wings, to fly away?"

"White men have been here," said another. "See; does an Indian put such things as these upon his feet? But where is the Oneida whose tracks we saw yonder?"

"Ugh! the white men have carried him away."

"Let us call the white chief," said one of the St. Regis. "He is very wise, and will tell us what to do."

As he spoke, a firm step sounded upon the bank above, and a tall form pushed its way through the crowd of St. Regis and leaped down upon the beach. The Indians evidently revered him as a leader. Thrusting one or two young warriors out of his path, he stooped and examined the signs upon the sand.

"Bah! it is useless," he said. "Whoever has done this deed has taken a boat and gone his way. Sons of the St. Regis, the heart of the white chief is very sad when he thinks how great an evil this will be to tell in the villages, when we return, if we do not bring back many scalps. Let it teach you to hate the Yengees more and more."

A savage murmur was the only reply he received, but many hands were shaken in a threatening manner across the bright water.

"Go back to the dead, children of the St. Regis, and prepare to bury them out of your sight. I will come to you when I have suffered my tears to flow."

The white chief was left alone upon the beach, and parting the brambles softly, Austin looked down at him. He saw a man considerably taller than himself, clothed in a rich dark hunting robe, but wearing, in a sort of Scotch bonnet, a single plume farther, as the sign of his rank in the St. Regis. He evidently was a man of gigantic strength, and his voice had the true ring of command in it. As he raised his head and looked back toward the shore, the young man saw that he wore a mask which covered his face to the upper lip. This mask was securely fastened behind, so that no slight force could tear it off. But there was a blench in the man which ruined an

otherwise noble frame. He was slightly hunchbacked, or rather, one shoulder rose higher than the other, giving him a distorted and ungainly look. The eye which looked so keenly over the lake was one of wonderful power, keen and piercing, and Austen felt that the man could be a dangerous enemy. Bending forward to get a fuller view of him, a rotten limb upon which his foot inadvertently rested gave way and precipitated him to the bank below, unhurt, but full in the sight of the masked chief, whoever he might be. Austen started to his feet, and for a brief space the two looked into each other's eyes with a questioning stare.

"Who are you?" hissed the mask. "I need not ask that, since you wear the accursed uniform of the Colonial Rifles. You are mine, and thus I claim you."

Too proud to cry out for aid, and knowing that it was more likely to come to the masked chief than himself, the young captain closed with his Herculean antagonist and exerted all his strength to bear him to the ground. "Larry" Austen was famed in Albany for feats of muscle, and no ordinary man could put him on his back, and this the masked chief found. In vain he put out his almost superhuman strength in the endeavor to raise the young man from the ground and fall upon him; the feet of the captain seemed tight to the earth, and although his body swayed backward and forward before the gigantic strength of the mask, he still stood up.

"Curse you!" hissed the mask. "I'll have you, by this hand!"

"You must win me ere you wear me," was the cool reply. "I hope to show you that Laurence Austen is no child in arms. Call your myrmidons, you may need them."

"Never!" whispered the masked chief. "We will fight this battle out alone. Look to yourself."

They had paused a moment, by mutual consent, while the whispered conversation went on, and, at the signal, they again put out their great strength. It was the like of the giants. Up and down the shining sand, hard and fast, ready to take advantage of any slip on the part of the other, the two strong men fought. The pride of the masked chief was aroused; he would not call out for help, although he felt that while he had the most strength, Austen was a skilful

wrecker, and shot an accident or a misstep might give him the advantage. That advantage came suddenly. Austin saw it too late, and the mask threw himself forward to finish the struggle, when, by a dexterous twist of his body, the captain recovered himself, and before the mask had time to brace up again, deposited him on the sand, breathless and half strangled. Seizing the dagger from its sheath, the captain held it at the throat of his vanquished enemy, who saw that he was overcome, and was about to call for aid.

"Hush! For your life—for your life, man! What would you do?"

"Would you kill me?"

"What else could I do if you bring down the St. Regis on me?" replied the young captain. "Beware!"

"Stick it to him, captain," said a voice, suddenly. "Stick him and run; and then run as if the devil kicked you on eend. The fat is in the fire."

Giving his enemy a rap on the head which would have stunned an ox, the young man snatched up his rifle and ran into the water to meet Hungry Bill, who was urging his own canoe, which he always kept upon the lake, with all the force of his arm. But the captain was not fated to escape so easily, for just then the St. Regis began to swarm down the bank, and, catching a glimpse of their leader, lying prostrate and senseless upon the sod, they raised a shout of anger, and dashed into the water in pursuit of the young captain. He saw that he was overtaken, and, turning, clattered his rifle and swept down the first two who approached, while the dip of Hungry Bill's oar sounded nearer and nearer.

"Keep back, you thieving hounds" he cried, as he swept the weapon from side to side. "Keep back if you value your lives."

Again three or four of them rushed in with their hatchets, but the strong arm beat them back. But just then the mask recovered, and started away to them in the Indian tongue. At the word, for such it seemed, the whole party rushed in at the dip of Hungry Bill, just as Hungry Bill was within three canoes' lengths of him.

"Dive!" shouted Bill. "Dive like a duck, darn you!"

Throwing away his rifle, which could be of no further use

to him, the young man obeyed, and disappeared from the view of the savages in the calm, blue water. At the same instant Hungry Bill whirled the head of the canoe the other way, and waited anxiously. A moment passed and the young man did not appear. Had he sunk forever in the deep water, never to rise until the deep gave up its dead? Another long minute, and with a shout of joy, the guide saw the dark hair of the captain rise from the water, far in front. He had put into practice an old schoolboy trick of swimming under water, in which he had always excelled, and put a good distance between the shore and himself. The moment his head appeared the canoe was put in motion, shooting through the water, not in a direct line, but with a zigzag and erratic course, calculated to disconcert the aim of the savages. But, as good luck would have it, they left their firearms on the bank, taking only their knives and hatchets into the water. Two or three who had rifles commenced firing at the white-haired guide, but with poor success, for at each shot a wild laugh came back over the water.

With a magnanimity worthy of a man of higher rank, the guide kept his canoe in a line with the head of the captain, who was swimming rapidly outward, and thus shielded him from the shots of the enemy.

"Ha, yip!" he screamed, as a rifle-ball cut the air close to his face, almost razing the skin. "That made my face! I'm. The rascal meant it for me, I do declare! Never mind; a miss is as good as a mile. Swim on, capt'in; the more distance we put between us and the shore where I take you in, the better for us."

Hungry Bill, standing upright in the stern of the canoe, the long paddle gripped in his nervous hands, and his white hair floating back in the afternoon wind, rowed the larger of the Indians even more than the escape of the captain. As soon as they could reach their weapons, a volley came slipping over the water toward the tall figure of the guide. Most of them flew wide and some fell short, but a rattling sound was heard, and the long clay pipe which was stuck in the mouth of the guide fell broken to the ground, and for the first time, he stopped, and roared back a defiance at the enemy, while the captain climbed in over the bow of the canoe.

"What is the matter?" said Austen, anxiously. "Are you hurt?"

"Hurt be darned. Hurt? 'Tain't nothin' I s'pose to break a man's pipe in that unnatural way! Look yer; I had that pipe in my mouth. 'Twas a good pipe, and has bin in the family nigh three hundred year. Yes, it has, by gum. Oh, darn your painted Lide, Mr. Injin! If I don't have your sculp for that, then I'm a sucker."

And, striking his fist at the Indians on the shore, Bill took to the paddle, and was soon safe from the fire of the enemy.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ISLAND HOME.

WHEN there was no longer any danger from the fire of the savages, Bill ceased his labor and mournfully collected the shattered fragments of his pipe, muttering curses against the hand that sped the bullet.

"'Tain't no ornery clay pipe, you know, capt'in," said he. "If it wa', do you think I would make such a fuss over it? But the truth of the matter is, that pipe has bin in the family so long I hate to lose it in such a dumb foolish way. Three hundred year my folks has kept that pipe, and now—"

"I bought it for you in Albany."

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"I bought that pipe in Albany," replied the young man. "Now don't pretend to get angry, old boy. Here is a piece of the stem you didn't throw over, and I know all Vander-de-er is fit as a fiddle to be deceived."

To the captain's surprise, Bill Epps took him by the hand and shook it warmly.

"Thank you, capt'in, thank you. I've took a weight from my mind. Come to think it over, I left my gran'ther's pipe at home packed up in cotton. The family relic is safe; I could weep tears of joy."

"Nonsense! Don't be a fool."

"Don't be a-- By gosh! I'm settin' so bad I don't know what to do. I guess we'd better quit. Here; the old man ain't goin' to stay with you any longer."

"Good-by," said Autzen. "Give me the paddle before you go."

"Paddle! What fur?"

"As you are going to leave, of course you intend to swim ashore, and the paddle will be of use to you."

Bill looked at his companion with a vacant stare of amazement, then a grin came up on his face and he burst into full laugh.

"You know how to take the old man, don't you?" he said. This was one of Bill's many peculiarities. Although by no means old, he persisted in calling him off an old man. "I guess I won't swim to-day any more. Had enough this mornin'!"

Just in front of them lay the island behind which the boat had gone which carried the sensible cliff. Toward this point the canoe tended, shot round the point and landed in the little bay upon the other side. It was a beautiful spot, one of nature's most enchanting scenes. Above them, two hundred yards from the shore, rose a dark wood, evergreen vines twining with the foliage of the beech and maple. Close to the shore the ground was as level as a bowline, and covered with short, green grass. Bill pushed his canoe up to the bank and hauled it while his companion waded the shore. This done, they fastened the canoe and stood together upon the bank of the island.

"No good to stay here. Come, off you go," said Bill, and he struck out on a fast walk.

The young captain followed. His course took him directly toward the center of the island, pushing through undergrowth and tangled path until they came suddenly into a little clearing in the center of which a host of hand-hewn logs had been piled. Four stakes, with crooked tops, had been driven into the earth, and upon these crooked stakes were piled in the form of a house, roofed with poles. Upon the top of this, hand-hewn logs had been laid, thrown to form the roof, and the logs were formed of the same material, intertwined and roughly hewed. The front of it was left open.

Hungry Bill walked up to the opening and looked in, and a girl who was sitting upon a bear's hide before the door started up, at first with an expression of alarm, which changed to surprise when she saw who came. It was the lady who called her. If Perdita, and upon a bed of piled moss in one corner of the room lay the strong figure of the Indian Che-nun, fast asleep. His arm, bandaged as it had been that morning, was laid across his naked breast, and resounded with the pulsations of his strong heart. He was evidently well cared for.

"You?" cried the girl, looking almost timidly at the boy. "I might have known you would try to get to see me."

"Lady," said the young man, "My suspicion of me gives me more than I dare to say. I have kept the letter of my agreement with you, and have only come here because we were ambushed by Indians, headed by a chief who has a white face but a black heart. I only escaped by bad fortune, and reached the camp, and Bill Epps brought me here."

"Bill Epps?" cried Perdita. "Have you betrayed me?"

The girl stood before her with bated breath, like a schoolboy about to be punished.

"I didn't think you'd believe, miss," he said. "I thought you'd be in the other place. I think it's no harm done to let us stay on this part of the island."

"Yes, if you do not go upon exploring expeditions," replied the girl, softening.

"He won't do that," said Bill, in his quiet way.

"And why?"

"C—c—I'll shoot him if he does. Don't you fret, miss. Epps will take keer of you."

"Let me hope that you will regard this a cult upon me as the signal of danger to you, Miss Perdita," said the young Indian. "If you knew, as I do, the power of which the Indians of the earth are capable, you would fear for yourself as much as I do."

"What tribe are they?" she said.

"St. Regis."

Perdita grew deadly pale at the name of the tribe, gasped for breath, and laid her hand upon her bosom. "The St. Regis?"

"It's so, miss," said the guide. "You see, the chif here fell in with four of them, and had a little misunderstan'lin' with 'em. Them four Injins won't hurt no one no more. They ar' St. Regis, bet yer life. I know the breed."

"Stay here, both of you," said the girl, eagerly. "You are right, sir. The time has indeed come when we shall need your help. The St. Regis here?"

She caught up the Scotch bonnet, which lay upon the earth near at hand, and ran out of the hut, evidently winged by fear. The young captain looked a moment in surprise at his companion, and then, stooping low, he looked into the face of the wounded Indian.

"He sleeps well," said he. "Your surgeon is a man of skill, friend Epps."

"Yaus, yaus; bet yer life. He knows what to do. Waal, as we've got to wait a little while for the gal, I guess I'll take a snack. This chap is poooty hungry, I allow."

"Can you think of eating at a time like this?"

"Waal, capt'in, this coon thinks he kin. Anyway, he'll make a big try at it."

"What are you going to eat, then?"

"Hold your hoses, capt'in. I'll show you in half a minit. This critter never goes without his fold'r, you know."

Pushing aside a heap of leaves near the head of the sleeping Indian, Hungry Bill drew out a small, oblong paper box, which, when opened, revealed several large slices of fried venison and some bread. Twisting his face into various shapes expressive of the highest enjoyment, Bill began to devor the savory food with a relish which no danger could take away, and a determination which nothing could daunt, while the young captain laughed in spite of himself.

"Wittles is wittles, capt'in, and I kin spoil my chif."

"I should say that you could," said Auten, as he saw him stuff a piece of venison half the size of a man's hand into his mouth at once. "Take care you don't choke your chif."

"Not a choke," said Bill, speaking with some difficulty. "Mortal pizen, why don't *you* eat sathin'? That little mister understandin' with that ugly cuss they call the male chif can't make you hungry. It allers does me when I have a cold. Look thar; the Injin is wakin' up."

As he spoke, Chenango lifted himself upon his unwounded hand, and stared about him in utter surprise. The old man who acted as his surgeon had given him some powerful narcotic, and he did not know he had been brought to the Hermit's Home.

"What is this?" he cried. "Has Chenango passed the silent river and entered the spirit-land? Who was there to light a fire for him to brighten his path across the deep river?"

"Be quiet," said the captain. "You are very weak, but with a little care you will soon be well."

"Yes, keep cool, red-skin," said Bill, showing himself. "You got into a pizen difficulty with a lot of St. Regis braves, an' wiped 'em out, ef you remember."

"Oh, yes," replied the chief. "And my white brothers took me up when my blood was flowing?"

"Twan't no more than I'd 'a' done for any human, but I calculate I orter do as much as that for Chenango, the Oneda."

"My brother has a good heart," said the chief. "Chenango will remember the kindness of his white brother, and the day may come when his heart will grow warm toward the man who saved the life of the Indian."

"Don't bother, Chenango! I ain't goin' to stand any nonsense, you know. This coon is always ready to help those who help him."

"Listen," said Chenango. "There is a girl among the Onedas whose heart is soft toward Chenango. She has broken the sick with him, and will go into the lodge and be his wife. If she shall bring a son in her arms some day to the chief, Chenango will tell her to teach him to love the white hunter who stopped the flowing blood of the father, and saved his life."

"Oh, get out, now!" said Bill, shuffling his legs uneasily.

"And for the young war-chief of the Yengees," said the Oneda, turning his dark, expressive eyes upon the face of Amasa, "he is my brother, and I love him."

"You are very kind, Chenango," said the young captain. "I thank you."

"I am weary," said Chenango, letting his head drop again upon the moss. "As I lay here asleep, I had a dream. I

was not alone in the wigwam. A maiden of the Yezees, fair as a white spirit, came and sat by my bed and soothed me into rest. I felt a hand, soft as the hand of Natalie, the love of Caenango, laid upon my forehead, and it bade me sleep. A voice, soft as the whisper of the robin, sang in my ear, and lull'd me into rest. Why do I wake and find it gone from me? Did the Great Manitou send to me Natalie cloth'd in the form of another, to give me rest?"

"It was no dream, Caenango. A fair white maiden was sitting by you when we came, but she is gone now."

"Will she not come back to the cliff and let him thank her?" demanded the Oneida.

"She is here," replied Austen.

Gilding forward with the sameairy tread, Purdie, brilliant in her beauty and grace, stood at the entrance of the belfry bower, looking in at them. But her, with a countenance wan, fearing the utmost fear, was the old hermit who had come with Hungry Bill, to bind up the wounds of the Indian. He evidently had come in great haste, for his dress was disordered and he wore no hat.

"Captain Austen," he said, "Purdie tell me that you have just encountered a portion of the tribe known as the St. Regis. Is this true?"

"It is, sir. If necessary, my guide can corroborate my words."

"It is unnecessary, sir. I ought to have known it myself, but I must confess that in my haste I forgot myself completely, and did not look at the dead Indians, but thought only of the wounded man. Who leads this savage band?"

"I know nothing of him except that he is known as the mink chief," replied Austen. "I had a struggle with this man upon the bank of the lake, and I can vouch for it that he is a person of the greatest singular power. I am too ill to fight myself, but I assure you that I threw him easily by a trick."

"Mark you say?"

"Clearly. A thick strap passes from the upper part around the head; another passes under the chin, making the mink a sort of skull-cap. It is put on with great care. He is, too, deformed in a slight degree."

"In what manner?"

"One of his shoulders is higher than the other."

"I do not understand that. The man I suspect had the form of sand, tall as this cliff, and as upright—the face of Apollo, and the heart of Apollyon—a task given to hide the heart of a fiend—the slavery of man at the hands of the devil itself. You look strange, but it may be I am saying too much. You mean, this is to make you willing to my demand that you will let her go? Are you ready to keep your word?"

"To the death."

"You speak boldly, and your face shows a noble heart, or I might be mistaken. But all so I thought of—But no matter. We are in danger of no ordinary kind, and perhaps can save ourselves, by your aid. Will you give it?"

"Try me."

"And you, Bill?"

"This sleep is really," said Bill, quietly.

"Hush!" said the old man.

Every one peered and listened, and heard a stealthy, cat-like step upon the forest leaves.

CHAPTER V.

THE DEATH OF THE PANTHER.

Who could tell, if indeed it was a human being? For sure enough, which none of them could divine, a cold chill fell over the party, and no animal except a panther. Tom Lee, who was a pistol, and turned forward. A bullet whizzed past his head, and just as he drew it from the belt, he saw the red eyes of Bill Karp, and the hairy ball come. He fired, but missed, and then, as he could not turn to the right, he fired with his pistol, and hit the tree. The bullet struck the tree, and the tree gave a low groan, and fell. Whether it had made it fall in this deliberate spot, or whether it had fallen of its own weight, the panther, drawing his long claws, had clung to it until it fell, and down to the ground he came.

island. Be that as it may, the fierce beast crouched before them with fiery orbs glancing from side to side, as if selecting a victim.

No beast which roams through the American woods was, in the time of his power, more dreadful than the great panther. His tremendous strength, lightning-like swiftness in pursuit, and activity, made him more dreaded than even the grizzly bear, because old "Ephraim" was rarely seen near the haunts of men, but frequent in only desolate places, while the panther came even into the sheepfold to seize his prey. As Aunt Anna pointed the pistol and pulled the trigger, a fierce growl sounded, but only the click of the lock was heard. In his haste, the young man had forgotten that he had been in the water, and that his pistols were in his belt all the time. To drop the useless weapon and draw his dagger was the work of an instant, but not a moment too soon, for the body of the panther appeared again in the air, bounding at the immovable figure of the young man, who stretched out his arm and received the heavy body upon the long blade, aimed to strike just in front of the shoulder. A jet of hot blood spouted in his face, and he was prostrated by the rush of the beast, and expected to feel her teeth in his flesh. But although the heavy body still lay upon him, and he was half killed by the flowing blood, the brute did not move. Slipping from beneath his savage enemy, Lawrence struck again. But he struck a dead enemy. The first blow had been fatal, and the knife had gone home to the very heart of the king of the woods, directed by the hand of Providence.

"Good blow," said Bill, slapping the captain on the shoulder. "Couldn't have done it better myself. That's something to brag of when your black hair is like his," pointing to the old man.

"Are you sure it is dead?" murmured Perkins, as she clung to her father. "Are you very sure?"

"Quite sure," said Aunt Anna, giving the body a kick. "I am a little proud of this achievement, upon my honor. This has been a busy day, and I will write it in red letters in my journal."

"Captain," said the gray-haired hermit, coming forward, "I have to thank you for my daughter and myself. I shudder

to think what might have been our fate if either of us had met this bear first, mad with hunger. But, perhaps there is another."

"I don't think it," said Bill Epps. "This critter wouldn't be here, except for an accident, for the darned brutes don't used to walk any more than a cat. I know all about 'em, because I've fit 'em on every spot of ground, it seems to me, between the Mississippi and New York. But, let's take this curion away and throw it into the lake."

As told by the captain, he dragged the body of the panther through the bushes to the lake shore, which was only a few hundred feet from the point. Before throwing it into the water he took out his knife and scalped the brute in a scientific manner and thrust the ears into his belt. "If we get safe through all this, Captain Long, you will have to have this to show." *C.C.*

So speaking, he gave the body a push with his foot and it dropped with a dull splash into the water below. Night was now coming on, and they hurried back to the boat.

"To attempt to hide from you the fact that my daughter and myself live in this island alone would be foolish," said the old man, "and I shall not do it. My reasons are my own, and I do not care to give them. Enough that I seek here the quiet shelter from persecution which I could not find in my own land. Here I shall have to end my days, but my only loss is my arms, and I can replace me, even here. Captain Long, have you strength enough to walk a short distance?"

"Let me try," said the old fellow, rising. "Yes, but I am very weak."

"I am afraid not," said Amsten, giving him his arm. They did not go far, but the old man could not walk well, so finally he sat down. A short while later he said, "I am afraid I must stay here. There is no place where I could get help, and there is wild country if they had been discovered by the Indians. The old man is dead, and I am a goner, but with me will have to go all his possessions, his gun and his saddle, his coat and his pants which he wore the day of the Indian attack. The rest will be

had moved aside so easily rested upon a pivot, so arranged that a child might swing it, when the spring upon the inside was set. Perdita entered first, Captain Austin followed, assisting the chief, and the old man came last, closed the stone, and set the spring.

The path over which they passed was worn smooth and hard by much use, and led after three paces to a flight of earthen steps, leading upward. Reaching the top, Austin found himself in a small room, perhaps twelve feet each way, dug by the hand of man out of the heart of the hill. Up on the other side was an opening which showed another room of about the same size.

"Come and see how we get the air," said Perdita, as the chief sunk down upon a pile of skins in one corner. The captain followed her into the next room, and she removed three stones of different sizes from the wall, and showed him that upon this side the wall was not much more than a foot thick and was strengthened by saplings forced into the earth above and below. The roof was formed of the same material placed more closely together.

From the openings formed when the earth was taken out they could look in three different directions and see the sea.

The only part which was hidden was the long strip of water behind the island. The position was admirably chosen and showed a master mind in its construction.

"Is this your work, sir?" said the captain.

"Call me Marstowe," replied the hermit. "That is a name by which I have been known. Yes, this is my work, with nothing else which I will show you when the right time comes to avert the coming storm. It seems strange to you that a man like me, with a beautiful child like this, and with a wife, should make myself a home in the wilderness—such as a hermit and recluse. Enough that I have done it, nothing but a stern necessity could have forced this separation from society upon me. Here, apart from the world, I am safe. I had left behind my enemies. But, they will find me here. My God, they will not let me rest!"

"Father, father," moaned Perdita, throwing herself into his arms. "I am with you; I will be true to you for my life long."

"You too, Perdita. Yes, yes, you are well named Lost; you have lost every thing to make life sweet to the young, the wealth and station once yours, the companionship of the young — but I forget myself. You see how we live, gentlemen. In this place which I dug with my own hands to while away the time, I have lived two years, and they were as happy as any I ever passed in the breasts of men. We drink from pure cold springs, and eat the game and fish with which the good God has so bountifully supplied land and river. We lie down to rest at night secure in this strange retreat, and wake refreshed. We have no cares but to make each other happy, and we have done so until now."

"Did you never hope to leave this place?"

"In a certain contingency, very doubtful to say the least, I might," replied Marstowe. "I did not come hither alone. One man in the band from which I came knows that I am here, and should that contingency of which I speak arise, he would come to me, even at the risk of his life, to tell me of it. But others whom I have cause to dread, are more likely to come than he. Chérango, you must rest. As for us, we have work to do. I don't know this night who these St. Regis are who have followed me to my island retreat."

"Followed you?"

"I think so."

"They may be a war-party simply."

"They ain't a war-party, nyther," said Bill. "This child knows better."

"Why?"

"Didn't I see three winmin on the bank? Injins don't take winmin on the war-path. I'll tell you what it is — the Injins come out hyar on mischief, but they didn't come to fight no more than they could help. If they kin steal any thins, or take a few scalps, they'll do it; but that ain't the object."

"Do you think you could find out their object?" demanded Marstowe.

"Bill Dipp's could try. Now what do you want him to do?"

"I want you to go with me, and try to discover who these men are."

"I'd ruther go alone."

"I can't will not do. I must go with you, to decide whether

I have more cause to fear this masked man than any of the Indians who roam through this wild region."

"I think I could do better alone."

"Impossible. I must go."

"Then this child must speak the truth. You don't yet know enough to go into the danger I must go into. Can you crawl like a snake, and wake no echoes or rustle in the leaves? Can you walk as softly as a panther, and step on a stick without breaking it? Can you tell the cry of a loon that is a loon from the signal-call of the Indian, and see craft in every broken twig, and leaf turned over?"

"I am afraid I am not an adept in these things."

"Then I guess Hungry Bill would do better by himself."

"You do not know what you say. This man with the mask troubles me more than I can tell. I must know him. I must find out who and what he is. Why does he wear a mask? Why does he not come out boldly in the face of day, and let all men see him as he is?"

"Doubtless he has his reasons for this," replied the captain. "I am half inclined to think you had better let Bill have his way. He is a born scout, and you would only hamper his movements, I am sure."

"You give me this advice?"

"I must."

"And you, Perdita?"

"I do not think you have any right to risk yourself needlessly, father. Bill Epps knows every foot of ground along the lake shore, and how to track the savages to their dens. Then why should you, who have no such knowledge, venture to follow his steps?"

"I only wish Clementino was stronger," said Bill, "and we'd lift we made the run. It is bent their hole? I guess it's about time to go. Let us make our start."

"You are careful."

"Got to be, in these times. This boy has had many a dozen quarrels with Indians not to know his way up to the lake this time. Now look. You'll know the call of the Indian, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Then let the ban-call be the signal. If I give it three

times, one, a long stop, two, three, quick, then you kin know that I'm in danger. If I give it once, wait long enough to count three, and give it again, then that means I want Captain Larry. If you git it once alone, followed by the scream of the holler, that means danger for you. So lay low and keep dark, and let this coon work!"

Bill prepared himself in his own way. He stripped off all superfluous clothing, wearing only his greasy buck-skin trowsers and a calico under-shirt, with a belt about his waist, into which he thrust his knife upon one side, and the dagger of Austen upon the other. His rifle he left upon the floor of the room, and was about to go out, when a thought seemed to strike him.

"Let no man undertake any such work as this on an empty stomach. I'd hate to die hungry," he said. "Ain't you got a bite of something handy?"

"Raging passion strong in death," said Austen, laughing. "You see in this the strength and weakness of Bill Epps. About to go out on a heroic undertaking, he turns back to satisfy the cravings of an unnatural appetite."

"He needs it, I am sure," said Perdita.

"The critter is pretty hungry," was the pathetic reply. "Most gone, Bill Epps is."

"And yet he devoured nearly a pound of venison steaks and beaver in proportionate quantities not half an hour ago," said Austen. "There, get him something to eat, the lumber. I believe he'll turn cannibal some of these days."

"What's a kannible?" demanded Bill.

"An eater of human flesh."

"Then that ain't nothin'," rejoined Bill. "I'm a kannible already, if that's all. I'll tell you how I cum to be one."

"If you be in in that strain now, we shall be bad friends, Bill Epps," said the captain. "Get him something to eat quickly, Miss Perdita, and stop his mouth, or he will be telling some of his disgusting stories about eating snakes and things. Pah!"

"Now don't he got an awful temper, miss? I leave it to you. Did you ever hear tell of such a chap?"

Perdita looked, and set before the speaker a plentiful supply of venison steaks and corn bread, the staple food in that

region, and he ate with as keen an appetite as if he had not tasted food for three days, while the men of the party stood impatiently waiting for him to finish, and wondered at his colossal appetite. But Bill ate on, unconscious of the admiration which he inspired, while the supply of bread and bacon decreased at an alarming rate.

"You'd breed a famine about as quick as a swarm of ~~legs~~, my young friend," said the captain. "Are you nearly done?"

"Poooty nigh."

"Then take some of it with you and eat as you go. I think there is no time to spare."

He hardly thought Bill would take him at his word, but that individual at once spitted four slices of venison upon his dagger's point, crowned the whole with a slab of corn bread, and started.

"Provisioned for a siege," said Austen, looking at him angrily. "Will you never conquer that depraved appetite?"

"I guess I will in time," replied Bill. "I work hard to conker it, but it takes a deal of venison to do it."

"I will show you the way out, and go with you to the canoe," said Marstowe. "Remain here with the chief, Perillta."

The three passed out together and went down to the shore. The canoe lay where they had left it, and after a short conference, in which he recapitulated his signals and impressed them upon the minds of his hearers, the scout pushed out into the darkness. Listening as carefully as they could, they could not even hear the stroke of his paddle, and knew to what perfection Bill Epps had brought his Indian habits. The old man returned to the cave, while the captain sat down upon the headland, to await the signal of Bill Epps.

CHAPTER VI.

HUNGRY BILL IN TROUBLE.

He sat there in a sort of waking dream, looking out across the dark water, thinking indistinctly of Perdita and Marstowe, of Cachago and the masked chief, and wondering what connection that strange man had with the new friends he had made that day. He was evidently a man of importance among the St. Regis, else why did they obey him in every thing? He was proud of his achievement in overthrowing a man of his master's power, and was going over the struggle in his mind, when the light of a torch gleamed out for a moment on the lake in front, and disappeared as suddenly as it came. Then it flamed again, again appeared and he saw it no more.

He sprung to his feet, and ran out upon the beach, as far as he could go, until he stood directly over the cavern home of Perdita and her father, twenty feet below. Lying prostrate upon the bluff, he peered out across the water, and suddenly observed that some kind of craft was slowly approaching the island. As it drew nearer and passed under the bluffs, he made out two men astride of a log, which they propelled by means of flat pieces of wood, such as we see driven along the banks of any lake or river. He could make out their plumed head-dresses, and knew that they were Indians. Just then he heard the call of Bill Epps, signifying danger to those on the island.

"Your call did not come too soon, my friend," he thought. "Let us see what can be done."

The log had come to a halt directly below him, and one of the men spoke in a low whisper:

"What will the chief do here?" he said.

"Silence," was the low reply. "The blackbird chatters, but the great horn of the St. Regis keeps silent."

"Bill Epps?" thought the captain. "I need no help!"

Drawing his knife carefully about, he felt a certain stone in his hand and recognized it. It was a large stone, weighing

perhaps ten pounds, with knobs upon it which would not fit well if applied forcibly to the human head. Lifting it carefully, without noise, he bent forward, and threw it with all his force at the head of the nearest savage. He heard a dull, cracking sound, and knew that he had not missed his mark, and the leading Indian fell into the water with a broken skull. The second man, in alarm, endeavored to back out of the dangerous position in which he found himself, but the captain was too quick for him. Throwing himself over the Indian, he laid him upon the head and shoulders of the Indian with a shock which nearly shook the breath out of his body. But he was a powerful savage, and quickly recovering himself, grappled with his foe in a determined manner, which showed that he had no design of tamely yielding to the enemy. He had an advantage over the captain in one respect, for while he could cling to the clothing of the soldier, his own body was bare, with the exception of the breech-clout, and his skin was lubricated with the oil of the wild goose in such a way that to grapple with him was next to impossible. The water was not deep, and the two men struggled to their feet, with laboring breath and strained muscles. Austen had managed to seize the neck by the wrist of his right hand, and he could not use his knife, though he strangled to get his hand free for that purpose. Seeing that this was useless, his endeavor was now to get into deeper water, and therefore forced the young white man to loose his hold. But the captain shot out his left hand, and grasping the savage by the scalp-lock, he forced his head under the water, and in spite of his struggles, nearly succeeded in drowning him, when the savage kicked vigorously, and they slipped off into deeper water, where the young man was forced to relax his grasp, and get back to the shallow water. The savage was too weak to attempt to swim away, and also remained, drawing his breath as he did so. Austen reached up him again, and drove a blow with that infallible left hand which had thrown the Indian upon the sandy beach. Wreathing his weapon round his hand, the young man threw it into the water, and, with a shout for Marstowe, who joined him in a moment, and easily dragged the Indian up the bank, and laid him on the sand. The blow dealt him by Austen had laid open his forehead like the kick of a horse, and he was bleeding profusely.

"How did this happen?" said Marstowe, as he looked into the face of the savage by the light of a small dark-lantern he had brought from the cave, keeping the open face turned toward the center of the island. Arsten explained.

"Then you have heard no signal from Bill Epps?"

"Yes. He gave it a moment ago."

"What signal?" demanded Marstowe.

"Dangerous. He had doubtless found that the savages had sent out these men as spies. There is no better scout in the Indian country than Bill Epps. I have tried him in many ways, and though he has a rough shell, he is a pearl beyond all price. How did you know him?"

"That is soon told. I was out upon a hunting expedition to the mainland, and there I was attacked by a wounded stag. You are a hunter yourself, and know what it is to meet a wounded stag at bay. I am not the man I once was; age and much trouble has robbed once well-built sinews of their strength. Bill Epps sprang upon the scene and shot the stag while he was rushing at me to finish me. After that, Perdita was assailed by a wandering Indian of the Mohawk tribe, a freebooting rascal, who cared not who he made his prey. Bill was again on hand and killed the savage. We buried him upon the slope of the hill across the channel, near the spot where you saw Perdita this morning."

"You were the eyes of our guard. Like most young men I have a fancy for unravelling mysteries, and your residence here is a mystery I plant at Albany. Some believe it, others do not. I thought my friend Bill knew something of it, and asked him. Upon that subject the oracle was mute."

"I believed him to be a man to be trusted, and so I confided to him the secret of my residence here, and asked him to keep it still a secret. I see he has kept his word!"

"You may be sure of that. The fellow has been offered great sums of money and another of infinite value to him as a secret, but he has always refused to tell the secret. I say if he had a thousand dollar rifle, worth forty dollars, if he would tell me, but he persisted in his refusal. You could not have trusted a worthier man."

"It is a strong character. Why does he keep silent now? I fear some evil has befallen him."

"I think not. If he is in any personal danger you will surely hear from him. He is doubtless lurking about the camp of the masked chief, seeking to gain intelligence, and it is evident that he has already discovered that these fellows have come over to spy upon us, and given us the sign. Ha! strike him! Do not let the villain escape!"

Their conversation was brought to a sudden close. The Indian at their feet had been "shamming Abraham." Taking advantage of their conversation, he rolled suddenly out of their reach, and leaped from the bluff, followed a moment after by Austen. But he was too late, for when he gained the sand below, the savage was already half a dozen yards from the shore, astride of the log, paddling for his life. Austen raised his pistol, the companion of the one he had tried upon the panther, but, as before, it missed fire, and the savage escaped.

"I do not like that," cried Austen. "He will tell them that some one else besides Bill Epps and myself are on the island."

"Hark!" cried Marstowe.

They heard the signal which called the captain to the other shore, pealing out across the water. "I must go. Where is your boat?"

"Wait here a moment," cried Marstowe, with earnestness. "I will bring it directly."

Springing over the bluff, he disappeared in the darkness. A moment after the young man heard him call, and leaping down after him, found him standing on the shore, holding the light boat which Perdita had used. Austen sprang in and seized the oars, the old man sat in the stern, and the boat shot out in the track of the flying Indian.

"Give way!" cried the old man, eagerly. "We may run that scoundrel Indian down if we take care!"

The boat seemed to fly across the water, under the vigorous strokes of the young captain, while Marstowe bent eagerly forward and scanned the dark space between him and the shore.

"I see him," he whispered. "Row as you never rowed before. I will steer you upon him. He does not see us yet. One stroke with the right hand. Keep her steady. And he sees us. Lay down to it; pull hard!"

The Indian on the log had seen his pursuers, and was making frantic efforts to escape, but the heavy log moved like a snail, compared with the rapid movements of the skiff. The savage looked over his shoulder and redoubled his efforts. But a hundred yards still separated him from the haven of safety; not much on land, but a long stretch on water for the last minute of a desperate struggle. Ten feet of water only separated between the savage and his foes, when they saw his tall figure tower up suddenly upon the log, and heard the sudden plunge, as he dove into the bright water.

"Row on," whispered Marston. "Heavens! he will escape."

The young captain gave three rapid strokes and then paused. He knew that if the savage came up at all it would either be close to the shore or somewhere near the spot. He was not mistaken. The savage popped out of the water within three feet of them, and, clutching his right-hand oar, Arsten struck at him with the blade. The force of the blow was expended upon the water, for the Indian drew a long breath and sank just in time. When he rose again he was within a few feet of the shore, and in shallow water. He rose, made a gesture of decision, and uttered a yell as a signal to his comrades, and ran up the bank.

"Chew that, you 'tarnal critter!" shouted a well-known voice, and Harry Bill started up suddenly from the cover of the bushes, shot out his long arm, and gave the Indian a blow which sent him rolling to the sand below. But this fellow was armed with a hard head, and by the time he reached the strand, the savage was on his feet, and ran along the shore toward the lower end of the lake.

"Go to hell!" roared Bill. "The old man won't chase you."

"What say you, Bill?" cried the young captain. "Shall I come ashore?"

"I'll come to you," replied the guide. "The old man has got to tell you. Run in close."

They landed upon a little point, which ran out into the lake, and the aged and faithful guide shook hands and were about to part, when half a dozen dark forms plunged down upon the sand and caught him to drown them. The captain was

already in the boat, and saw that his border friend was struggling in the grasp of two stalwart Indians. In this time of peril Bill showed the natural heroism of his nature. His foot was on the gunwale, when he was seized, and putting forth all his strength, he gave the boat a vigorous shove, which sent it a dozen feet from the shore. Just then the moon struggled from behind a cloud and shed a mellow light upon the scene. Bill, pinioned by both arms, yet struggled fiercely, and the captain turned back to his aid.

"Keep off there!" he shouted. "Wha-a-t? Do you want to be taken, and leave the little gal alone? Let the old man take care of himself."

"You came to my aid. Shall I leave you in peril?" shouted Austen.

"You durned brute, kan't you help me more with your hands free than you can with 'em tied? Let up, you painted reppyle! What do you want to choke a man fur? Shet off, captin. You kan't help me now, but just trust the old man. He ain't liable to stay long with his hands tied!"

"He gives good counsel in his singleness of heart," said Marstowe. "Push off a little, or we may get a flight of arrows."

They pushed off a few rods from the shore, and by this, while a confused struggle and trampling on the sand told that the active guide was giving them a great deal of trouble. Angry cries were heard, and at last the whole party went down in a confused mass, from the midst of which, to their great delight, a single man arose and struggled free from the rest, and ran up the beach at full speed. In some way or other the guide had managed to throw off the bands which held him, and was off like the wind. A wild chorus of execrations sounded, and the Indians trooped off up the sand, following close upon the track of the flying guide, who reached a deer. Indeed, it was well known all along the border that Henry Bill had beaten the best runners of the Oneida, and Mohawk nations, including the noted Fleawinter, in a race for a cup at Oswego. The men in pursuit were well mounted, one of them fully equal to Bill, and this man, holding his hatchet ready for a blow, was within six feet of him, straining every nerve to get within striking distance. Grasping his ears

the young captain rowed up the beach at his best speed. The crews of the canoes took them around the curved shore of a little bay, and the oarsman laid his oar-trumpet to his ear, and by this means was enabled to keep pace with the four Indians, who were rapidly leaving the two poor yellow-clad savages behind them. But the savage was gaining at every step, and it seemed to Austin that Bill had slackened his stroke. "Well, the Indian still kept his pace unbroken." The Indian was raged, and at last to descend upon the head of the youth, when he suddenly threw himself at the foot of his enemy, and catching him by the feet gave him a toss. The Indian struck a parabolic curve in the air, and fell with his head upon a stone and lay senseless. Henry Bill did not wait to decide whether the enemy was dead or alive, for his other enemies were closing in upon him, but catching the hatchet from his Indian hand he ran on, striking the flittering youth in the air. The gullies made a chafed man. Every movement of his body, the glint of his will eyes, spoke the active, violent warrior. His broad face, now flushed still with rage, was pale, looking over his shoulder now and then at his enemies, and calculating his course. His short strides with the swift drummer, and the slowness of his steps, in order to accomplish his purpose, had enabled the Indians to run upon him, and three of them were about him, clutching his hair, eager for his blood. They knew him now, and fearfully were more hated by the S. R. than Henry Bill. His comrade had him up a slope, and he reached a level path above the lake, twenty feet high, at the base of which the water lay dark and deep, suddenly of fathomless depth.

He had turned at bay, and suddenly he was hit with a stone, so small a piece of raw rock as to pass through the veins of the hand, threatening them with the hilt.

"Yah!" to the S. R. "I passed the fastest water on us, and I know as fast as the Ganges with the help of my mother's hand, when we got into the village."

Henry Bill, who had heard their tongue, gave a contemptuous snort.

"Give up to you! The old man ain't quite ready."

As he said this he lifted his hatchet and buried it at the

speaker with so true an aim that the savage dropped to the earth, with a red mark on his forehead. Hungry Bill uttered a wild laugh, and turning, plunged headlong from the bluff. The water closed over his head, while two hatchets whistled over the spot where he had stood.

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT BILL HAD DONE.

The savages ran up to the verge and looked down. There was a ripple in the water where he had disappeared, and as this subsided, they looked to see the guide rise to the surface, and some of the others, who had come up, waited to launch their tomahawks at his head. But he did not rise. Whether he had been wounded when he fell, or had hurt himself in falling from that great height, they did not know, but it seemed certain that the days of Hungry Bill had come to an end. Austen paused in dismay as he saw the water cease to circle about the spot where he had gone down, and thought that he had died for their sake. The oars dropped into the water and he let the boat drift where she would, while he covered his face with his hands.

"Hyar, you," said a voice close to his ear. "What you a doing? Help the old man in, for he's mighty tired, he is."

Austen extended his hand with a shout of joy and caught the hard hands of the trapper in his. "Brave fellow," he said, "I am glad you are saved. Get in quickly."

"Oh, git out now, will you?" said Bill, as he clung over the gunwale. "No nonsense now; the old man won't stand it. Glad to git here, though. Pooh! I'm played out, I am. That Injin ran like the deuce. I hope he ain't dead though."

"How did you get here?"

"I s'pose you think nobady but you kin swim in water, eh? I'd like to swim ag'in' you once. It would be the liveliest time you ever see. Let's have a drink. Did you see the old man whack them two Injins down? The

old man ain't no chicken, though he do have fits 'casionaly. What's on the ticket next?"

"Bang!"

A bullet glanced over the water, struck the bow of the boat and passed completely through it, within six inches of the spot where Bill sat. He put his finger in the hole made by the ball, with a derisive laugh.

"See that! I believe my soul them Injins had jest as low shot a man as not. I guess we'd better git out of this. It's rayther warm about hyar and the old man don't like it."

"What have you been doing?" said Marstowe. "Do not keep me in suspense."

"Let's git out of this first," said Bill, as another ball passed over the boat with a sharp whistle. "They keep pointing them guns this way. They do it a purpose, I do believe."

An instant took up the ears and put a good distance between them and the shore, while Bill sat watching the scene of his late encounter, as coolly as if it was an everyday occurrence, while the Indians danced frantically upon the shore and uttered direful threats against the galle, to which he only answered by a grin.

"Get bad temper, the hull bilin' of 'em," he said. "Pull away, captain; down to lake. Keep well out; I've got another wrinkle in my head and I kain't ret till I git it out."

"But tell me what you have done directly, Bill," said Marstowe. "I am on thans until I know."

"Well, let the cap row on while I tell you. I landed in the cave below here, and it was so feasty dark I couldn't see my hand. Not a very good time for a man who has got to tramp the woods up and down and them full of Injins, every one of 'em bilin' mad. You see they lay the skins of their bear critters that Cherokee slewed to the old man, and that makes it bad for him. Well, I managed to crawl along and waded water, and soon got campfire lit. Then I tried to light campfire this side of the lake, but the Old Man was most of them gone down toward Indian country. So I made blankets and saddlebags. I crawled up hill of knoll, and I see that it was a big camp,

nigh on to forty of 'em in all, squatting round the fire smoking their dandled old pipes. But 'em, they know mine, but I've marked the man that off it, the Indian said. I knowed the touch-hole was on the blank. I hit him, too, last night. He don't smoke the claim, it's pipe he took."

"Go on, go on," said Marlowe, in an impatient tone.

"Don't hurry the old man. Plenty of time to tell the story after we're done to talk. Keep off that point, captain. There's two of them traps a-making up to git a shot at us. Have you a heavy rifle in the boat? I left mine on the island."

"I thought it with me," said Marlowe. "I did not know but we might need it."

"Then hand it here," said Bill. "I calculate to teach that fat Indian or not to snake up to shoot off white Indians. Give me that powder horn. It's a long shot, but I guess I can make him feel uneasy."

He primed the rifle carefully, and Austen could pall for a moment when nearly abreast of the point. The savages who had drawn the attention of the guide were crooked slightly forward, evidently with the intention of getting a shot at the boat as it passed. But they reckoned without their host if they meant to catch the cabin-piper, for his keen eyes saw every thing. The leading savage was lying partly concealed by a projecting bough, but a prominent portion of his frame, that part which "Mark Twain" calls the "political economy" of a man, showed above a hollow in the log. Bill had hardly leveled the rifle when a stream of fire poured from the nozzle, and the report rang out across the water. Up leaped the Indian, struck to madness by the sudden and disgraceful nature of the wound, and clapping his hands to the injured part, dashed wildly up and down, yelling like a very mad, wild Bill Bill down his rifle, and indaled in a fit of laughter.

"That Indian won't set down easy for a month, that's this chap's card against him. You lost yer life he won't." (Cack.)

"You didn't want to kill him, then?"

"Course not," (cack.) "What did I want to kill him for when I know that if I shot him there will hurt him worse than a ball through the heart. Yet I did." (Cack, cack, cack.)

"Go on with your story, Bill," said Marlowe. "What did you find out concerning the marked claim?"

"Oh! Didn't I tell you? Well, I hid behind a log, and I peeped on the cranny he come and set down on it along with a lamp. And that I knowed, that liv's among the St. Ruis. A fine fellow he is, if ever I see one in my life. I'd cut this nall if I had to do it to put my knife right thru his pizen bone, but such is human nature that I don't do it. 'Twould hurt him even if my life is worth. They had a long conference, and someone that I j'legged had run away from Quebec about three year before, and that they seemed bound to find. I didn't hear the name at first, but after a while I understood what he was called the Chevalier Marly. I couldn't make out just what he run away for, but I did make out that the masked man follows him like pizen, and wants to ketch him."

"Huh?" said Marstoave. "If it were not for that deformed shoulder of his I think I should know him. Did he seem to know where the Chevalier was kill'd?"

"P'raps as of he suspected. What's the use of hiding it? He has been somwhere that an unknown man inhabits this field, and he has come here to find if it is the man he led a?"

"Indeed?"

"He still know'd he was kill'd a neighbor, and the gal with him. Seems that the Chevalier had a gal with him too."

"I understand you, Bill. You think the Chevalier, whom this man follows, is my man. Suppose it should be so, would that be enough for you to withdraw your friendhip?"

"Not at I can any way acquainted with myself it ain't," replied the girl. "I'll stand by you. That ain't much for to do. I heard them say that they'd sent out two spies to look over the field. I drawed out and give you the signal. Did you hear it?"

"Yes."

"What came to them I firs?"

"One of them lies at the bottom of the lake, the other es-
caped."

"That's all the stories I have seen, and the fable I have told in the High Country. No matter. You pass me word. Then I'll get old man and take the boat back, and we'll go up the back of a hill. We kin do it, but ver
likely."

After a little consultation they pushed the light boat into

the inlet of the stream, and here the guide and captain landed. The place where they reached the shore was so overhung by bushes that they could lie hidden from the sight even of a man standing on the bank directly over their heads.

"Why not leave the boat here and let all three set out on this expedition? You may need strength more than you have."

"No," said Bill. "You row out into the lake, and just abreast of the St. Regis campfire—you kin see it shining now—and lay thar till you hear the horned owl hoot. Like this."

He gave the note of the night-owl with such belligerent exactness that the young captain looked up to see where the bird sat. This strange man was a perfect mocking bird in this respect. He could imitate to perfection the note of any of the birds of the forest, or the cry of any of its beasts. He did not seem to think it any thing of a feat, either, or that there was a possibility of its being a cause of suspicion to the Indians.

"Never you mind what I'm going to do," said Bill. "It's something that must be done right now or we'll hev a hornet's nest about our ears. Reflect the signal, and don't have no foolishness about going with us now, 'cause I won't stand it. Now, capt'in, git out. Push off, Mr Marstowe; the old man wants to see you out of the creek safe."

Marstowe reluctantly consented, and paddled carefully out of the river, or creek, properly speaking, and left the two men standing alone upon the bank of the stream, under the overhanging boughs. It wouldn't do to stay there if they meant to do any thing, however, and the two crept cautiously up the bank, for, though not as well posted in woodcraft as Hungry Bill, Austin was no tyro, and had tracked Indians before now.

"Come it easy," said Bill, with his mouth pressed against his companion's ear, so that the whisper should not be heard. "Look out for sticks. The first you break means that we mu'nt git up and dust. Keep your eyes on me and don't say a word."

Austin nodded, and rising slowly, and keeping their bodies inclined, to catch the slightest sound, and to see that they stepped on nothing which might betray their whereabouts to the enemy, the two men crept cautiously forward. The campfire of the enemy glared before them, upon the back of the

the, and toward this the path led. Pushing silently forward, the sound of voices soon broke upon their ears, and a mournful chant, which the guide knew to be the death-song of a brave, broke the stillness. Taey knew that every one in the camp must join in the funeral ceremonies, and crept up the bank, and saw that they had brought into the circle the man at whom Bill had hurled the tomahawk upon the bluff.

"His pipe is out," said Bill. "Wonder ef he'll break a man's pipe ag'in?"

To those who have never seen an Indian burial, there is something imposing in the highest degree. The body of the slain brave, in his war paint, was rested upon a sort of platform in the middle of an open space, and around it, in solemn order, moved the stately procession, headed by the masked chief and the half-breeds mentioned by Bill. Several women were in the procession, and marched with the braves, keeping up that mournful chant.

Bill took his companion's arm, and signaled him to come on. He did so slowly, and passing the spot where the Indian march was going on, they moved down the bank to a spot just below the place where Austin had his struggle with the masked chief. Upon this flat they saw a man standing, holding up a gun, keeping guard over something, though what it was the captain could not make out.

"You stay here," whispered Bill. "I'm after that Injin, and ef he yells, you can save my sculp."

Bill crept up the bank and disappeared, while Austin crept on in the shadow of the bushes and watched. He saw the savage stand like a stone, looking out across the water, and taking perhaps of his far-off land beyond the waters of the great lake, Ontario. He never dreamed of danger, for his comrade had brought him word that the man they most feared, Harry Bill, was drowned. They had not seen him get into the boat when he escaped.

What did Bill design to do? How would he get at the savage without alarming him? The St. Regis stood a little in front of a tree, which grew out from the bank behind him in an odd, crooked fashion, as chestnut trees often grow upon the banks of our lakes and streams. It was summer weather, and the trees had not attained half their size, but were

annoying things to strike upon the bare flesh of a man. Presently Austen saw the savage start, and clasp his hand angrily to his head, where one of the half-ripened burs had struck upon his bare crown. The angry muttering he made, and the savage look at the tree, showed that he thought the falling of the burs was the work of some mischievous squirrel or chipmuck.

"Clut!" he said, angrily, and leaned upon his gun as before. Presently another bur, larger than the last, bumped against his cheek, and with an angry cry he ran up to the tree, and struck upon it to drive out the mischievous occupant. This was precisely the end which the occupant desired, and a dark form dropped from the tree upon the head of the astonished savage, knocking him senseless to the earth. Before he had time to recover he was bound and gagged, and the galle signalled his companion to approach.

"What was your object in this?" said the young captain.

"Simply this yer. The masked chief he's bin about yer longer than we think fur, and ef you don't believe it, look at this."

Lying upon the beach at their feet was a large raft, capable of holding thirty persons. It was built of logs of pine, bound together with fibrous roots, woven and interwoven between the logs, holding them tightly in their places. Smaller logs had then been split in half, and laid into the hollows of the larger logs, making the floor almost even. Take it all in all, it was ingeniously contrived, and could not have been the work of a few hours.

"He has been here a week," said Austen, examining the raft.

"So the old man thinks himself," said Bill. "Now then, I guess we kin't leave this raft hyar. Ef we do, they'll make it warm fur us before to-morrer mornin'!"

"How shall we get it into the water?"

"Have a hunch," said Bill. "I was down to Allony when they launched the 'Yager Boy,' the dandiest craft I ever see floatin', just as wide one way as she was the other. Look here."

Looking more carefully at the raft, the young captain saw that it had been built with a fixed plan, and was laid upon

split logs inclining to the water. All they had to do was to knock away the shores, and the launch was complete. Austin laughed lightly and picked up a heavy stick which lay by the side of the raft.

"The first time I ever launched a ship," he said. "How that masked chief will roar when he sees that all his work has gone for nothing. Get on the other side and find a club."

"All right," said Bill.

"Are you ready?"

"Ready."

"Not quite," said a quiet voice. Both turned and saw the masked chief standing near, holding a pistol in each hand.

CHAPTER VIII.

BILL'S BASHFULNESS.

"One stupid moment motionless they stood," looking in each other's eyes, while the immovable figure of the masked chief stood there, the weapons leveled, and his dark eyes flitting fire through the holes in the mask. They knew that he had them at an advantage, for the first motion to touch a weapon would be death to one at least.

"I never allow myself to miss with a pistol at ten paces," said the mask, in the even, measured tones which spoke of intent anger. "What are you doing here?"

"Sort of looking round," said Bill, putting on an appearance of indifference. "I don't think I have the honor of knowing you, do I?"

"You will have that honor, and I doubt if you will appreciate it."

"Thank you. Good evenings go a good ways, you know. I'm afraid you like my general gait. I— How do you like that?"

Bill had been talking too long time, still holding the stick in his hand, with which he intended to pry away the raft. Lifting

it suddenly he pitched it with unerring aim at the head of the masked chief, who threw up his hands to avert the blow, and before he could recover he fell under a blow from the club of Austen. Snatching away his pistols, Austen laid them on the raft.

"Let's get her off as soon as we can," said he. "Off with her."

They struck away the shores and sprung upon the raft, which glided down the slide into the water, and far out into the lake just as the masked chief bounded to his feet, pealing out a startling war-cry.

"I wish we had dared to wait and take that fellow with us," said Austen. "Give the signal for Marstowe at once."

Bill sounded the cry of the owl and the boat of Marstowe soon boarded the raft. He expressed the utmost surprise when he saw it, and understood at once what an awkward instrument it would have been in making an assault upon the island. "I have to thank you so many times that I am at a loss for words, Bill," said he. "When shall I be able to repay you for what you are doing for me and mine?"

"I'll quit you if you don't shut up," roared Bill. "I ain't going to be bothered to death this way. It's as much as a man's life is worth, and I don't git no peace. Gimme that oar, and tie the boat to the raft. We've got to take her over to the island."

Seeing that the worthy guide was determined not to be thanked, the old gentleman gave it up and assisted them in paddling the raft to the island, and bringing it into the little cove where they secured it and landed.

"Who goes there?" cried a sweet voice.

"Friends with the countersign," said Marstowe, sonily.

"Advance, friends, and give the countersign," was the merry reply, and Perdita stepped out of the shadow of the trees. Her father kissed her. "That is the countersign," he said.

"Shall I give it also?" said Austen.

"Upon my word, sir?" said Perdita. "No, I think not. Let my father give it for you."

"And look here, miss," said Bill. "If you tell me to take this young man by the neck and drop him into the

water there, the old man is ready to do the job, or bu'st something trying."

"What fur, Bill?" demanded Perdita, merrily.

"What fur; what fur? Didn't the damed brute offer to kiss you? I'm spiling fur a chinee to lick some one and I'd a little ruther lick him than not!"

"Thank you," said Perdita. "You shall kiss me if you like, you dear creature. I am sure you have done every thing for us."

"Well?" roared Bill, flushing to the very tips of his ears. "Now quit that, you. What's the use of plaguing the old man. You don't think I'd kiss a gal, do you?"

"Would you kiss me, if I asked you?" said Perdita, wickedly, approaching her merry face very close to his.

"Gway?" shouted Bill, desperately. "Don't; darn it, don't. You plague me, and I take to the woods, now that's a fact. The old man ain't used to it."

"I never thought you would refuse me," said Perdita. "I have no other way to reward you."

"Clemmie!" yelled Hungry Bill. "Git away! Darn a woman, anyhow; they ain't no right in the woods. Lemme alone, will you?"

The embarrassment of the guide was so obvious and his bluster so vivid that a general laugh passed round the circle, which stung Bill to madness, and casting a look of fury at his tormentor, he darted into the woods in the direction of the hut in which Clemmie had been lying when they first visited the island. Hungry Bill was famous for his boldness all along the Mohawk, and it was related of him that, when living at home, when a boy, the appearance of any neighboring female was enough to cause him to take to the woods.

"You will frighten him away," said the captain, endeavoring to restrain his laughter. "When you approach Bill in that way he is taken up on his weak side. I'll go and speak to him."

"Well, tell him he need not kiss me if he objects so strenuously," said the young lady.

"Or perhaps he would prefer to have it done by proxy. In which case he could readily find a volunteer who—"

"You git out," replied the guide, returning to his old whimsical manner. "I guess you've done it already. Now go back and bring me my powder-horn and rifle. I forgot 'em when I came away."

"All right," said Austen. "Any thing else?"

"Well, if you could manage to bring me a morsel of something to eat, I'd like that."

"Oh; are you hungry again?"

"You bet I am; dressfully."

Austen laughed, and went back to the party, and they entered the cave together. They found the chief much stronger, and sitting up on his blankets. He received them with a grave bow, and a stately grace which sets well upon the native chief.

"My heart tells me that the gray-haired chief has done much to give back strength to Chenango," he said. "Is it not so?"

"Next to Bill Epps, you owe him your life," replied Austen, disregarding the gestures of Marstowe, who would not have had his good deeds spoken of. "Perhaps more to him than to Epps, because his skill was greater."

"This man than is my father," said the chief, rising, and placing the hand of Marstowe upon his heart. "Let him take the thanks of the Indian, for he was kind when the chief had no claim upon him."

"Let Chenango make haste and get strong again, for the red wolves howl about the wigwam of the Gray Hair," said Austen, adopting the figurative language of the Oneida.

"Ha! Dare the wolves of the St. Regis prowl about the house of the Gray Hair? Let them fear the wrath of the Oneidas, the strong men of the Six Nations. What chief leads the St. Regis to battle?"

"The masked chief."

"Ugh!" said the Oneida. "Then let my father put a hatchet into the hand of Chenango, and he will go forth and slay the white chief of St. Regis."

"When you are stronger. The masked chief can not come to us here, and after three suns Chenango can go out to battle. Until then, let him rest in peace."

"It is well," replied the chief. "Chenango will listen to the words of the young war-chief, for he speaks good words."

Three days passed and they heard nothing of the masked

chief. The capture of the raft had been a damaging blow to them, and Austen knew that it would take some days to make another of the same kind. Bill Epps remained in the fort by himself most of the time, though Chenango spent some hours each day with him, maturing plans for the defense of the old man and his beautiful daughter. Each day the girl showed more and more the natural graces of soul which were hers, and Laurence Austen plunged more and more into the mazes of that mad passion of love, but did not speak of it. He was certain that this girl was born in another sphere of action, for she had read much and traveled in lands of which he had only heard and read. They had a few choice books in the cave, and the two would sit upon the rocky bank, screened from the view of those on shore, and read from those rare old poets, which both loved so well, and enjoy it too, in spite of the cloud which threatened them. She would not speak of her past life, though he hinted at it often.

"Do not ask me of that," she said at length. "It would not become my father or myself to boast of what we have been or of the glories of other days. Enough that it is past and in all human probability we shall never mingle in the society of which my father was once the pride and boast."

"You fear this masked chief? Do you know him?"

"I can not tell. My father is in doubt too, and perhaps after all he does not seek us. Perhaps our fears are not well founded."

"Can you think of any one whose interest it is to find you?"

"I can think of one whose interest it is that we should be buried from the world, and who would rejoice to know that the last of the race had found a quiet grave, from which they could never rise to give him pain. But, why could he not be satisfied? My father would never have troubled him, and we would have lived out our lives in quiet, happy in each other's love. I can not think that he is the one, nor is he like the man you described as the masked chief."

On the afternoon of the fourth day after the capture of the raft, she was sitting alone in a secluded part of the island,

toward the lower end, and under a great tree, from which she could look out across the beautiful lake dotted here and there by islands of varied sizes, covered with verdant foliage. It was a beautiful day and a light breeze just stirred the surface of the lake and sighed through the foliage over her head. The rest of the party were busy upon another part of the island and not likely to disturb her. The balmy air, the murmur of the wind and the song of birds lulled her into rest, and she dropped her head upon a mossy knoll and fell asleep. One hand was thrown up to cover her face from the sunrays, and the other rounded limb was underneath her head, and there she slept, alone. She did not hear the low dip of the paddle coming up from the opposite direction from that in which she had looked for the enemy and she slept on, unconscious, until a canoe grounded upon the gravelly beach and was drawn up on the sand. Then a head was raised cautiously above the bank, and the masked chief appeared upon the scene.

CHAPTER IX.

A VILLAIN'S WAY.

BILL EPPS was in a rage. Something had happened to distract the even tenor of his way, and that something was the railing of Captain Austin, who accused him of being in love with a Dutch girl upon the Mohawk at Schenectady. It made no difference whether this was true or not, Hungry Bill would have resented it just the same, and would have denied it up hill and down dale, as he did in the present case.

"Now, Bill," said Austin, on the morning of the fourth day after the capture of the raft, with a sly wink at Perilla, who was standing near, "don't deny it. I know you are in love with the Dutch girl; everybody says you are."

"Then everybody is a damed liar," roared Bill. "I don't even know any gal. See here: you want to pick a miss with me?"

"Now, look, Bill. I'll tell all I know about it, and leave Mrs. Perdita out of the tale between us. It was at Schenectady, about four or five months ago, and I was walking on the bank opposite Mohawk, when who should I see but Bill Eggers and Miss Van der Flak. They were sitting on a log, and just as I came up he put his arm around her waist, and kissed her, and—"

"Liar, liar!" shouted Bill, desperately; "the infernaldest liar I ever see."

"Kittie saw me just in time, and gave Bill a slap in the face that nearly knocked him into the river. 'Dere,' she said, 'dat will teach you not to dry to *zhe maa* again!'"

"Oh, suffering Jerusha!" said Bill, dragging off his coat, "I'll lay yer rag, Captain Austin. I've stood a good deal from you, but the old man can bear no more. Clean off them rags quick, and walk in. Hop up to me once. Ya-a-aah! I'm the painted catamount of the Mohawk, the Big Avenger of the North Woods. Yip, yip, yip! ya-aah! Put up yer hands, do."

"Oh, get away, Bill," said Austin, giving him a push. "What nonsense! Do you think I am going to fight in the presence of a lady?"

"Didnt you insult the old man in her presence, say?"

"I never knew that it was an insult to tell that a man like I a pretty Dutch girl."

"But it's a lie—a darned lie. I never did it in my life. I ~~never~~!"

"Well, have it your own way."

"I'll tell the juries, Bill," said Perdita. "I know now why you so often kiss me the other day."

"Well, I ~~says~~ you'll drive the old man mad between you and me, I ~~know~~ it today. Does you hear? I do hope you'll come and take this yer party. 'Twould please me mighty well, that would."

"I don't believe that, Bill," said Perdita.

"Well, I ~~says~~ I left you today. I've labored to get this ~~way~~ with you, but I ~~ain't~~ do it. Say, will you lend me your umbrella if it rains?"

"Goodbye, Bill. Goodby," said Perdita. "I hope you will get safe to the settlements. Shake hands before you go,

for you have been very kind to us, and we shall never forget it."

"Darn my buttons ef the gal ain't tuk the old man at his word. Look here, you do 't think so hard of me as that, do you? You don't believe the old man would leave you in trouble? It ain't his gait. I'll quit you as soon as I git you all safe, though, for a-lying about the old man. Come along, you. I want you to go and help me git my canoe."

"What do you want with it?"

"Some of those pesky latyves will be coming over hyar in it some of these nights, and I don't keer to be shot from behind a bush, I don't. Now whar's that boat, miss?"

She sprung away to get it, and soon appeared upon the shore, coming from some unknown hiding-place where the boat lay. The two went down, and though she pleaded hard to go with them, they would not allow it.

"We may have to go to places where bullets fly like hail," said Austen, "and I would not risk one hair of your head for untold wealth."

Perdita blushed deeply and turned away, and it was after this that the masked chief found her asleep beneath the tree, dreaming of the gallant young captain. Bill was in a bad humor, and when in that mood, did not care much into what danger he ran, but sat in the stern of the boat, glowering at Austen, and thinking over the grievance of the Dutch girl, Katrine Vanderdonk.

"See here, Capt'in Larry," he said, "do I know any Dutch girl in Dorrup?"

"How should I know?"

"Didn't you tell that little gal I did?"

"That was poetic license. They say poets can embellish the truth, and I am a poet."

"Is 'pole' the English of 'big liar,' capt'in?" said Bill, innocently. "'Cane if it is, you are the biggest pole in the world. You be, by gravy, and I don't keer who knows it."

"Take care, Bill, we are getting close in to the shore."

"You be—the *crudest* pole in the wild waste of the un-tid airth. Stibby; like ez not we'll git a dozen balls through us if we try to land, though I think most of them Injins are up above thar now."

The place in which Bill Lal left his canoe was upon the northern side of the lake, far above the Indian camp, and he had taken no pains to hide it. Austen was rowing, and Bill stooped with one of the extra oars, for the boat carried two pair. They rounded the point behind which Bill had left his canoe, and immediately that person began to swear like a pirate, much to the surprise of Austen.

"What is the matter?"

"Matter! Matter enough! Some uneasy villain has stole my canoe. I know'd it; I know'd they'd steal the old man's canoe, bu'st 'em!"

"You should have hidden it."

"DID I HEY TIME? Oh, merry Moses! I'm so 'tarnal mad I'd like to burst som' thing. Blame his old head that done it!"

"We may as well go back," said Austen. "No use crying for spilled milk."

They pulled back, and as they rounded the point of the island and neared the spot where they had left Perdita, the face of Austen blanched, and touching his companion on the arm, he pointed to a canoe, which was moving slowly through the water just in front, containing two persons, the masked chief and Perdita.

How was it done?

With a celerity and clarity which spoke well for his forest training the masked chief drew him self up the bank and passed the side of the sleeping girl, who lay slumbering in heavy, dark green brooch just stirring the clustering hair with a tiny tremor of sleep. The man passed him self over her with all fours, looking down upon her. His fingers opened and closed in a strange, nervous way, as if he resented some mighty passion. Then he drew a long, keen-bladed dagger from his belt and stooped over her. Would he slay her this beautiful child? Could he have the heart to do such a young girl? Evidently he hesitated what to do, for though he dropped his broad hand upon her mouth and nostrils, so that she could not cry out, and held the dagger high above her with the other.

"Hush! hush, in mercy, kindly. If you value your life, do not dare to speak."

"Would you kill me?" she gasped.

"If you force me to do it. Do you think the life of one woman would stand between me and my object? Pah; you do not know me. Come."

"What would you do?"

"Come, I say. Do you take me for a fool? You must go with me to the mainland."

"I will not."

"Living or dead; take your choice."

"Kill me if you will, I will not go with you."

A look of demoniac fury gleamed in the eyes of the masked chief. Twice he lifted the dagger and as often the look of undimmed firmness in the eyes of this brave girl stopped him, and he thrust the knife into his belt and caught her in his arms.

"The devil take me if you shall not do as I desire," he said angrily. "Come away. I am your master."

Releasing her mouth for a moment the girl screamed twice, as loudly as she could. Her voice was heard, and there rung out clear and loud upon the afternoon air the war-cry of the Oneida, and they heard Chenango coming at full speed. With a bitter curse, the mask lifted his clenched hand and dashed it into the face of the girl with stonning force, and then, placing her in the canoe, he thrust it away from the shore, and grasping the paddle gave half a dozen heavy strokes, which sent him clear of the island just as Chenango, wild with rage, bounded out upon the point of the island in full view of the scene.

"White dog," he screamed, "shaking his hatchet in the air, "stay and meet the Oneida. Coward, do you fear me?"

"Ha! ha! ha! My worthy chief, let these last words suffice. But you should have brought your rifle."

"A coward wars upon women; a great brave strikes at men," cried Chenango.

"Thank you. I think the coward's still the nobler, pray. I give you good day, my brave Oneida. We shall meet again."

"Ha! ha! white dog with a black heart," shrieked Chenango. "Do no harm to the beautiful child, nor insult her by a word, for if you do, Chenango, the Oneida, will follow you by

nigh, and day, even in the lobby's of the St. Regis, to shed your coward blood."

"Bah," replied the masked chief, fiercely. "To the devil with you! I am no coward, nor I; neither will I peril the safety of my enterprise for the sake of a combat with you now. But I tell you, real dog that you are, that a time may come when I shall make you repent your insults to me this day."

"Come back, then, and fight," roared the chief, who was almost beside himself with fury. "Do not make yourself a dog when you may be a brave. Come back, and if you slay me, you conquer one who is a chief of his nation."

The only reply was a shot from a pistol, but in his excitement the masked chief missed his aim, though the ball just grazed the cheek of the chief. Before he could draw a second pistol Cleopatra snatched up the bushes, out of reach of a bullet, and the Indian took up his paddle and sent the light canoe through the water with rapid strokes.

"Curse the Indian," he groaned. "Did he dare to insult me? I will have his heart's blood for those bitter words. However, I have carried my point so far that Padita is in my power."

She had received from the bow he had bent her, and set in the bow-end of the boat, a ring at him angrily.

"You may think you've got that I was forced to use you selfishly," said the Indian. "You made me wild with your cruelty. Now, that I have you in a place where your obstinacy can do no harm, I will be as mild as any lamb and your temper may have full sway."

"Who are you?" she said.

"I am he," he replied. "I don't propose to change my name, and I am only called Cleopatra, because it is part of my name. I have my reasons, and I take them to be honest, and so you will take them, I hope. There is one thing I do not mind telling you, which is this: I propose to make you my wife."

"I refuse!"

"Please, I implore you, Goddess. You do not understand the meaning of my courtesy—will not a forest chief like you let me marry her? Be strong for things

have happened, and are happening every day. When we are married—”

“ You are a villain.”

“ Any thing else ? ” he said, paddling slowly forward.

“ Yes ; I will add to it. An impudent villain.”

“ Ah. You flatter me, mademoiselle. Positively you do make me proud. Have you any other pet names you would like to call me ? Believe your mind if it is any pleasure to you. Perish the base wretch who would stop a woman’s tongue when its clack can do him no harm.”

“ You insult me. Take me back to the island.”

“ Hardly. I have traveled too far to get you to give you up easily. Do not be foolish, my fair maiden. It is mere folly to ask this of me.”

“ Then you will not take me back.”

“ Any thing in reason I will do. You ask too much.”

“ Do you know who I am ? ” she cried.

“ That stately attitude shows the old blood,” he said, with a look of admiration. “ Yes, I know who you are, mademoiselle.”

“ And is it for that you wish to marry me ? ”

“ You are a young lady of great penetration. It is for that and nothing else that I desire to marry you. Then you have great personal attractions, independent of that reason.”

“ Then the day of our power is come, and you seek to take advantage of it. Listen to me, sir. You spoke just now of my pride of race, and you spoke the truth. No woman of my nation is prouder than the women of my family, and they have good cause. They come from a long and noble line, *sous le ^à bras rouge*, and that line shall never be snuffed by me. You may kill me, burn me at the stake, offer any bloody doom you may, but you can not force me to marry you.”

“ Can I not ? ”

“ No priest will perform the ceremony.”

“ You think so. We shall see.”

At this moment he heard a sound which caused him to look up with a start, and there, within a hundred yards of him, he saw the boat of Perdita, rowed by Captain Auton and Bill Epps, their eyes wild, their pulses bounding, and a savage determination upon their faces. He uttered a cry of surprise

and laid out his tremendous strength in sending the canoe through the water, wild with the fear that his prize should be wring from him, even when in his grasp. The water foamed under the bow of the light craft, and she seemed to leap through the water, while a savage cry from the pursuing boat told that the men who followed were eager for his blood.

Perdita was appalled by the strange gleam which shone in the eyes of her enraged escort. She could not see his face, but those eyes spoke a desperate resolve, and she knew that in the event of their being overtaken by the pursuing boat she was doomed. He had taken out his dagger, and held it in his teeth, looking at her from time to time as the splash of the coming waves sounded louder and louder in their ears. She looked at Austin's face as it was turned over his shoulder, and it was grand. He looked at the water with the might of a giant. She saw that they had laid their weapons where they could easily reach them, and were ready for the struggle when it came. Near and nearer yet came the pursuing boat, and each moment the wild light in the eyes of the masked chief became fiercer.

"Keep up your courage," cried Austin. "We will save you, Perdita."

"Will you?" cried the masked chief. "It is not in your power. You have not caught me yet."

"But we will," replied Austin, for scarcely six boat's lengths separated the two craft. "Lay down to it, Bill. Break your back or catch him."

At this instant Perdita took matters into her own hands. She had been watching the progress of events, and ready to act when the right time came. Springing up suddenly, she gave him a sudden push, sending him completely out of the canoe. Then, seizing the paddle, she pushed rapidly away from him, and reached the other boat, into which she sprung.

"Don't wait," cried Bill. "Pull back, for our lives!"

CHAPTER X.

PERDITA WOUNDED.

The warning did not come a moment too soon. They had pulled the head of the boat round, and were already in rapid motion away from the land, when a volley from a dozen rifles and several arrows rattled all about them, knocking the splinters out of the light craft. There was no time to pay any attention to the masked chief, who was swimming rapidly toward the shore. As he heard the volley he turned and looked toward the boat, and uttered an angry cry as he saw that all the occupants were unharmed, though some of the balls had whizzed surprisingly near some of the party. Foaming with rage he sprang out of the water, and snatching a rifle from an Indian who was about to fire, he leveled it at the boat, and held the trigger. Perchance in a faint moon, and sank down in the bottom of the boat, while the masked chief, who had not meant the shot for her, but for Austin, threw his hands up to his face and fell to the ground.

"Row on, row on!" meened Perdita, as Austin made a motion to lay down his oar. "Get out of danger before you touch me."

"A coward shot," murmured the young man, as he threw all his force upon the oar, until it almost cracked. "I will pay you for that some day; be sure of that."

His lips were white with imprefectly restrained rage, and he kept his head until the scalding fire of the sun could no longer burn them, when he laid down his oar, and clasped the form of Perdita in his arms, moaning in pain, while she had dropped from her weak frame. The horses they had run over had been shot, so no animal could be seen, and as Austin lay on the ground, he thought he had better go to the village to get help. He kept his eyes closed, however, as he lay there, and he knew that he might be ill do worse than die there, and his father's spirit might be balked by their ignorant thoughtlessness.

"Lay her down, captain," said he. "Tain't no use to try any thing now. The oar is the only thing for you."

"She will bleed to death" said Austin, sullenly, looking into her white face.

"Can you hinder the bleeding? Don't stop to fool. The oars, the oars!"

Austin again took his place, and the boat sprung at every powerful stroke. Two such men, pulling with the energy of despair, make quick time upon the water, and she fairly flew, with a track of foam followed in her wake. As they neared the shore they saw Marstowe and Cheango standing upon the bank, waiting them eagerly. As the boat struck the beach, the old man saw the bleeding form of his daughter, and with a cry which was scarcely human, sprang down the bank.

"She is dead, she is dead! Oh, my darling, my darling, have I brought you to this?"

"Hold, father!" said Perdita, opening her eyes. "I am in God's hands as I yours. Save me if you can."

As she did this she fainted from loss of blood, and the old man tried to lift her, but trembled as if in a palsy.

"Let me carry her," said Austin. "I scarcely. Run on and get your instruments."

"You carry her?" said the father. "She is mine."

"Be it as it is," replied Austin, "and God do so to me and to my soul as I will take my revenge of the assassin who pointed the rifle at her heart."

Marstowe and Austin ran up the bank with the vigor of a bear. Austin followed more slowly, carrying the girl in his arms. There was a boat half-way between the island and the mainland, and the Indians were already making preparations to swim out for it. Cheango touched the guide on the shoulder, and pointed to them.

"I'll get her, Cheango," said Bill. "The old man is with you. Let me catch her in the arms of her father, for if she can't live, I don't know what to do with him? Git in."

The boat was full, and their party, begun to yell in a frantic manner, when the men in the boat were old Indians, the last and least of whom, were supported by rocks, would not stand from any pressure. If they did not get the

canoe, they left it in the power of the savages to cross at any moment, two or three at a time, and in their present position that would not do.

"Hark to them, the mink traps finds," said Bill, as he rowed hard for the canoe. "Git a paddle and sit in the stern, Chenango. We must have that canoe."

Seeing their determination, the masked chief resolved to defeat it, if possible. The canoe was within easy range of the shore, and the boat could not approach without great peril to the occupants. Two or three light logs were rolled into the water, and six or eight of the St. Regis plunged in, and pushing the logs before them, swam toward the canoe, which, under the force of a light wind blowing from the shore, was rapidly drifting out of range. Chenango saw this with a grim smile of apprehension, and knew that the Indians with the logs must swim hard to catch the canoe. But, when a hundred yards separated the boat and the canoe, and the logs were twenty yards away, they saw the plumed head of a savage disappear beneath the surface, and knew that he meant to swim under water to the canoe. If he reached it before them, he would certainly get back to his comrades before they could touch him, for the paddle was still in the bottom.

"Hard, Pocofoot, quick!" cried Chenango, startled out of his native stoicism by the imminence of their danger.

"Steer dead for the canoe!" roared Bill. "I'll show him. Let the canoe alone, you painted reptile. Ha!"

Just then the head of the savage popped out of the water within three feet of the canoe. Chenango dropped his right hand to his side, and detaching his hatchet, threw his hand suddenly backward. A ray of light seemed to flash from the boat to the head of the St. Regis. That ray of light was the hatchet of Chenango, leveled with unerring aim. The St. Regis threw up his hands and sank with a bidding cry, while the water was crimsoned by his flowing blood.

As the canoe moved the boat struck the other rammed, and drove off his right hand. Bill Pocofoot lay dead, and the heavy bullet half a dozen times through the thin bulk of which it was fired. It fell and sank immediately. Dropping instantly to his seat, he found that the quick-witted chief had understood him, and pulled the head of the boat round so

that it pointed directly toward the island, and they lost no time in getting out of the way of the St. Regis, who were not ten feet distant when the head of the boat was pulled round by the paddle of the Onondaga. Indeed, so close were they that Chenango gave a desperate stroke or two, and laying his hand upon the gunwale of the boat, tried to overturn her. Perhaps he might have succeeded, but Chenango raised his paddle and brought the edge down upon the exposed hand. With a cry of pain the savage released his hold, and but for the fall of his companions, would have followed the first man to the bottom. All this had happened upon the extreme limit of long-range shots, but the St. Regis did not dare to trust their rifles at that distance, and Bill soon put the boat out of danger. The canoe was gone and their work well done.

"Uch!" said Chenango. "All good, Fleetfoot. That well done."

"Bet yer life!" said Bill. "Let's git back to the island, for the wind is rising and this child thinks we are going to have a big blow."

The Indian gazed at the sky and nodded expressively. They understood the signs in the air. The clouds hung low and互相重叠. The wind was rising in fitful gusts and the waterfowl were seeking shelter among the reeds and ferns along the bank. In the west a dark bank of clouds were rolling slowly up, and an unnatural calmness fell upon the lake.

"This yer will give us time to think about it," said Bill, "and to cure the little gal, if it's a possible thing. See yer, Chenango, if you gal dies you and the old man will have a work to do."

"I have said it," replied Chenango. "Even in the midst of the St. Regis Indians, with his chiefs by his side and his women at his feet, I will slay the man who calls himself the master of all. Let Fleetfoot speak, and say that this shall be so."

"I have said it," said Bill, solemnly, in the Onondaga tongue, which he spoke better than his own. "Let it be so. And here—here goes to the old English," said Bill, "It's go and see the little gal. I hope she may do well."

"She shall live, if the love of her father can make her," said the Indian, "and his love is very great."

As he spoke the boat struck the land and they drew her up on the beach and walked toward the cavern home of Marstowe, and touching the spring, the manner of which Marstowe had explained to them, they entered. Marstowe rose to receive them and took the hand of Bill Epps in his own.

"Congratulate me, my friend," he said, joyfully. "My child will not die."

Bill Epps waved his left hand over his head and went through the motions of a cheer without uttering a sound, for he knew that the girl must be weak from loss of blood, and he would not have caused her pain for untold wealth.

"Friend, did you say?" he said. "Did you call this old man friend? I'll deserve it at your hands. Don't say nothing more, or you will make a fool of Bill Epps and git him to blubbering."

Marstowe only answered by a slight pressure of the hand, and then led the guile into the other room, where Perdita lay upon a pile of robes laid upon soft moss, pale as death but looking hopeful. Bill Epps passed the sleeve of his hunting shirt across his eyes, and then blew his nose violently to cover the demonstration.

"There, there, little 'un; don't you say a word. You git well just as soon as you can and make no foolishness. I hope you'll believe this old man when he says he'd rather lay than see you hurt. He woudl, by gravy."

"I know you woudl," said Perdita, in a weak voice. "I am not strong enough to thank you as you deserve, my good friend, but I will some time."

"Do not scold yourself, Perdita," said Marstowe. "My poor, pale darling."

"Dad ret his old life that did it," growled Bill. "I'll make him weep like a child for this! I can give you bad news, though. Chingoo and I have jo'nt you out all the men that come, so that they can't git at us with that, a'kin."

"Good!" said Marstowe. "I thank you, Chingoo. Bill has so often put us under obligation to him that I am almost ashamed to thank him."

"Then don't worry yerself to do it," growled Bill. "Don't act so fishy, now. I wanted to save my own scalp, I guess."

The old man smiled and the party moved out of the room, and Bill took this time to inform them of the approaching storm. "You'll better tell the gal," he said, "so that she won't be sick when the wind begins to roar. In an hour from this I can kiss off wouldn't dare to cross the lake to-morrow. I, and if it's in a state for anybody to cross this time days to come, then I'm a sucker. It's going to be the durnest blow you ever seed. Ain't it, Chango?"

"The spirit of the storm is abroad," replied Chango. "He will ride the lake in his canoe for three suns and moons."

"Excellent," said Marstowe. "And that will give us an opportunity to fulfil our plans; eh, Bill?"

"Right you are!" said Bill. "How was the little gal hurt?"

"The fall hit her in the shoulder and struck the bone and dislocated so that it is a flesh wound after all, for the bone was not shattered. I thank God that I turned my attention to surgery early, for it has been of use to me in this trying time."

"Hark!" said Bill.

Even in the depths of the cavern they could hear a sullen roar, increasing each moment, and they knew that the storm was upon them in its fury.

"Come outside," said Bill, "and you will see a sight you never saw before in all your lives. It's worth looking at."

"Let me speak to my dog first," said Marstowe, "and then I am with you."

He was gone but for a moment and then followed the others outside, in air, and out upon the lake land. There they saw a sight which they could never forget, even to their dying day.

Clouds obscured them. The air was filled with leaves and small twigs, buried here and there by the furious wind, driving across the lake from the west, through the long valley and up the bay. The waves were rising rapidly, each increasing in size, and crashing each other in long lines, each rush crowded by a sheet of dazzling foam. The

sky was murky and the clouds hung low. The forest upon the other bank was seen to rock and bend, and low and then some great monarch of the forest, whose foundations had been sapped years ago, came crashing down, with a shock which seemed to shake the very island. The trees upon the heathlands where they stood were small, so that there was no danger to them and they could enjoy the grand scene.

"Magnificent," said Austen. "I never saw any thing like it in all my life."

"The spirit of the storm rides on the blast and directs its course," said Chenango.

"How Perdita would enjoy this," said Marstowe.

"I can add something better," said Bill. "This will make them durned St. Regis hunt for thar holes. That's the best thing I can see in it. Seems as ef some of 'em won't git hurt."

The storm seemed to increase in violence. Stouter trees came crashing down, some torn up by the roots and some broken off from the parent stem fifteen feet above the ground. Every man was silent now, gazing silently upon the grand scene before them. In the presence of such a scene as this, man feels his own feebleness and the strength and glory of the Creator of all things. The waves, as they struck the heathland, divided into thin spray, which the wind carried inland, and they were covered with the flying vapor.

"This is gittin' monotonous," said Bill. "I guess we'd better hunt our holes."

"I shall stay here," said Austen. "At least for a little time. I never saw a sight like this in my life."

"No; and mowt be you'll never see it ag'in. I don't keer; I've got enuff of it and I'm going into the hole."

Chenango and Austen remained upon the bluff, watching the grand panorama before them. The Indian seemed to revel in this scene. His nostrils dilated and his eyes sparkled at each new sign of the strength of the elements. He stood with folded arms facing the storm, while his person was drenched by the blinding spray. All at once he turned, and laying his hand upon the arm of the young man, gave his idea of the Creator

"The Manitou is here," he said.

The young man bowed his head, and then uttered a cry, and pointed with his hand.

CHAPTER XI.

STORM-PLOTS.

A FLASH seemed to light up the bank in front, and, as if by magic, a stream of flame shot up to the top of a blasted pine and began to sprout among the trees around and through the dry under-wood. Whatever had started the flame, whether the Indian camp fire, a pipe, or spontaneous combustion, it is impossible to say, but in a few moments the forest seemed wrapped in flames, which rolled and spread, catching at the red-leaf pines and birches, crawling like fiery serpents along dry banks, and flapping out tongues of flame to catch at any combustible object. A chorus of wild cries told that the Redskins did not appreciate this strange occurrence, and by the light of the blazing forest, many of them could be seen darting in frantic haste into the water, willing to trust that element rather than the more dreaded one which threatened them. The flames still rolled on, increasing more, but leaving that part of the forest untouched upon the western side of the creek, and in this the savages, as soon as they could escape, found refuge.

"The Manitou is angry," said the young chief, covering his face. "I will cover my head with ashes, for the calamity has come upon the Onondas. It is very sad."

They turned back and entered the cave, leaving the two Indians to work their will upon land and water. The forest however righted in their conjectures. For three days the storm continued, but on the afternoon of the third, toward evening, it began to abate, and by twelve o'clock the lake was again calm.

By this time Peleg was able to be about though she carried her arm in a sling, and was pale from the loss of blood

and consequent exhaustion. As night came on and the wind began to lull, the guide began to show signs of uneasiness. He had fits of nervousness, and was continually going out to look at the sky and see that the Indians were not yet upon their way to assail them. Knowing something of the determined character of the masked chief, he was certain that he had not been idle during these three days, and had by this time formed some means to reach the island. And he was right.

During the first day of the storm the masked chief had lain concealed under an overhanging rock, safe from the falling branches and where the flames could not reach him, cursing the unlucky fortune which had brought the storm at such an ineopportune moment. The man was ill at ease, for he had seen the girl sink down when he aimed the rifle at Austin, and knew that he had hit her. Was she dead? Had his hand the guilt of that innocent blood? He staggered and plucked impatiently at the mask which covered his face. While lying there he was joined by the half-breed mentioned by Hungry Bill as being with him. This man's character furnished little which was interesting. He was simply a blood-thirsty, mercenary wretch, a good tool in the hands of an unscrupulous man, but nothing more, and we have given him no prominence in the story. His name was Louis Gerard among the French, and he was called "La Loup" by the Indians.

This sinner companion took a seat under the rock, a little way from the mask, looking at him in a covert way.

"Have you given up the chase, *non ami?*" he said, slowly.

"To the devil with you, Gerard! Do you come here to gloat over me, to make sport of my misfortunes? Life of my body, man, you will not be well received among the St. Regis when you return, and tell them that we have not even brought back a single scalp."

"I am not the lecher," said the half-breed, quietly. "Bah, say in so many words that you have given up the task, and let me work."

"Devil! you know that I have *not* given up, nor can I. I must marry this girl, if she lives, because that would be the

her to say. I must kill her father, if she is dead, for I can not let the great stake I am playing for."

"Gull! Now you are yourself a man. I can take pleasure in your society. But, upon my word, that was an unlucky shot of yours yesterday."

"Was it not? My heart still beat when I saw where my bullet had told its rest. Soul of my body, the girl has trusty guards. Do you think she cares for that young captain?"

"Do I? Get along! She can not choose but like him. He is fair, is he, brave, generous. The first and the last you can lay no claim to, so that we can count his attributes two to your one."

"You are the fool of life and I want me to kill you, friend Lass," said the monk, rising on his elbow. "I shall take the last step, sir, in performing that little task if you dare to provoke me; so bear in mind my admonition, and be very careful. Do you think the girl is dead?"

"How should I know? I saw her fall, and that is all I know of it. Teach, as you would give up the task, we must burn down the village! It burns as fit the devil does in it, and the St. R. is the better end. They say the Manitou is angry, and went to go back to Canada. You must watch them, or else in three days they will have you in the lurch."

"That will be far always before me," muttered the monk. "Why should I not kill my hand? She is beautiful, talented, and a good target for me, and would have made a noble partner in the state I shall hold."

"Ah, you do not care. Do not stir now. As her husband and son I always stand by at your command!"

"I might. I have decided long ago to make her my wife, if possible. If not, they are doomed."

He turned his face to the sea. From the place where they were staying he could see it well, and at times some great waves would sweep over the shore and glister at the shore through the blinding storm of spray.

"I might, and I might tell the old heaven I plot her. If it were not for the sea, I could make a raft. Where do you suppose they are going, the island?"

"They have not been, probably. You know that the eleva-

Lier is one of the most ingenious men in the world. It is a pity that his talents should be lost to the world. I wonder what he would give me to tell him what I know? More than you would, doubtless."

"Take care, Gerard!"

"I have been revolving the matter in my mind," said the half-breed, slowly, "and upon my word I do not know that I could do better than to go to him and let him know all about it. Perhaps I might marry the daughter myself, which would suit me well. I—"

Whatever he meant to say was stopped in its utterance, for the iron hand of the masked chief was at his throat, and he was borne back helplessly upon the sod, where he lay with eyes starting from their sockets, making appeals for mercy by signs.

"Dog; *cavard!*" screamed the mask. "Do you dare to speak of marrying a daughter of a noble house? I will kill you!"

Just in time to save the wretch from a deserved death, passion passed away, and the mask released his hold upon the throat of the victim, who rose to a sitting posture, black in the face, coughing and spitting blood.

"What was that for?" he gasped.

"Death, scoundrel. Do you ask me the question? I have a mind to finish you."

"You may have gone too far already," said Gerard, with his hand upon his knife. "Did you dare to choke me. Look to yourself, for it may make you trouble."

The mask was not in a position to quarrel; he saw that he had, indeed, gone too far. "It was your own fault, Gerard. You ought to know me better than to think I would endanger talk of that kind. Be more careful in future."

"You take me by the throat, you choke me like a dog. What care I for your poor blood? If I choose to burst it, my blood is as pure as yours. A French marquis was my father, an Indian queen my mother. Curse you, I am as proud of my blood as you can be!"

"Enough. I was hasty, and should not have done it. Let that suffice."

"It must, perchance. But, let me tell you, the result of this insult may not be what you wish."

"Would you betray me, Gerard?" said the masked man, in a strained voice, with a wicked gleam in his eyes. "No, no! Think better of it. You don't know what the result might be if you were foolish enough to do that."

Gerard, fearing to arouse the tiger in this man's blood, said no more, but stood under the shelter of the rock, looking gloomily across the lake. Just then Chonango came out upon the cliff, and cast an anxious glance toward the shore. Then he reentered, and they saw him no more.

"What do you think of the runner's statement that he saw a war party of the Oneidas upon the other side of the lake?" said Gerard, gloomily.

"I do not credit it. Neither would it turn me from my design."

"Yet that cliff is more to be dread than any of the rest, because the Indians are at his call."

"I suppose so. Thanks to the fire, even if the Oneidas come up, it must be up on the other side of the lake."

"True; but what if they have canoes? It is not a long way from the eastern end of the lake to the island."

"Barley ten miles from the point where the runner saw them. Dashed, if those cruel Indians come in time to break up my plan. This infernal tempest will be my ruin."

"What do you think of the St. Regis notion that this storm will last three days? They all tell the same story."

"They ought to know. We may as well take matters easily and wait our time. It must come, sooner or later."

During the night they gathered material for rafts from the ruined houses which were floating in the water, and on the afternoon of the third day had prepared two, capable of carrying twelve men each. Night came, and the waves began to roll up suddenly, and at midnight the lake was as calm as if it were a mirror reflecting its surface. Only the floating houses and the broken logs still lay in the burned forest, showing that the spirit of destruction had been at work. When the sun rose, though it was clear moonlight, the lake had become perfectly smooth. One raft, under the command of Gerard, went to the edge of the burned forest, with orders to make the assault upon the upper side of the island of the lake, while he came up in front,

Several determined warriors elected to cross by themselves, upon logs of their own choosing, and these were instructed to scatter themselves along the northern shore of the island, and land at various points. When all was ready they paddled out from the shore, and slowly approached the island. All was still, though every moment the naked chief expected to hear the sound of the death-dealing rifle. But he waited in vain. He knew that the men he was about to attack were no cowards, and it astounded him that they made no sign. The savages, who had not expected to surprise a foe so on their guard, and had paddled up boldly, were astonished at the profound stillness of the place.

"I'm afraid of a trap," said Gerard. "That infernal Epp is no fool."

"Cure him; the St. Regis may roast him to a cinder, for eight years, along with Captain Austin. Paddle on!"

The men obeyed, and the raft touched the shore, when the chief raised his battle to his lips, and gave a loud and defiant blast. Not a sound within the island told that any one heard it, though their friends upon the upper end of the island replied by wild yells of savage rage as they landed. The naked chief darted up the bank, leading his men on, but still the defenders made no sign. The bolder looked at the half-breed in dismay.

"What does this mean, Louis? Where are the enemy?"

"*Oui.* That is it; where are they? And echo answers, I don't know!"

"This is some trick of that villain Epp. Cure his impudence, he shall pay dearly for this!"

As he spoke he dashed the butt of his rifle heavily upon the earth, and it gave forth a hollow sound. The naked Indian uttered a cry of joy.

"Run to earth, are they? Come about now, men of the St. Regis. Our enemies are *here!*"

The fierce war-cries answered by a yell of approbation, and starting furiously up to the earth to find the exertion too much for his power. To spring down in this way over the rocks which led to the southern entrance of Matane, and his daughter, they leaped the stones which formed the pass, and knew that they must make an effort. Some of them ca-

down small saplings with their hatchets, with which they made a sort of shovel, and began to dig into the earth which formed the entrance to the place. Thirty men, working even with such inefficient tools, make quick work, and in less than half an hour a passage was cleared sufficiently wide to admit the body of a man, just over the flight of steps.

"All?" cried the men. "We shall have them now. Hi, within there! Come out and talk to me."

"Do you promise to let me return if your terms do not suit us?" said a voice, which sounded strangely hollow in the depths of the cavern.

"Ay," replied the mark. "We can afford to be generous in that respect. You are caught like rats in a trap."

"Then I will come out," said the same voice, and Captain Andrew went up the steps below, carrying a torch.

"What would you have?" he said.

A shout of rage from the savages above told that they recognized him, and the party had taken in their various respects but a few days. But their rage was still more easily expressed when Bill Epps appeared at his side.

"Good evening," he said, pleasantly, holding round the circle of wild faces peering in at the hole above him. "Nice kind of surprise party, this is. The old man is glad to see you."

"You take it coolly, Bill Epps," said Gerard. "Perhaps we may change that."

"I'd rather you wouldn't, boys," said Bill. "What do you want with us?"

"You must be cooler."

"S'pose so! What for? All friends here, ain't we?"

"G-d friend enough, as far as most friendships go. We don't know of you and your friends that we want to see you all up here."

"We can't come."

"Then we must fetch you."

"I don't care if I do. You see, we are bushful down here, and we rarely can't come out. We'd a dan sight rather stay down where we belong if you'd just a hove."

"I'm not going," said the mark, sternly. "You can't yield, or take the gun if need."

"I reckon we'd have to take them anyhow, so I guess we'll stay whar we be. I reckon we'll make it right lively for you, too."

Seeing several of the savages leveling their weapons, the two foresters darted back and awaited the struggle.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MASK REMOVED.

The gallant attitude of the two brave men somewhat astonished the St. Regis, who had not expected to be brayed by men who seemed to be in their power. But it roused all that was savage in their fierce natures, and they began to drop into the passage through the opening. Two files cracked, and in a second's space two souls had gone to judgment. The savages were now crowded into the narrow space, and Austen, backed by Bill Epps, stood in the doorway at the top of the stairs, and sent four shots from his long-barreled pistols into their crowded ranks. Shrieks for mercy, groans of pain, and shouts of vengeful import, rang through the cavern. Up to this time, no one had showed himself except Austen and Epps. The guide would not trust himself with a pistol, a weapon in which he had no faith, but loaded them as fast as they were discharged, answering the shouts of the St. Regis by a stentorian cry. But seeing the havoc which the gallant young man was making among his Indians, the masked chief shouted to them to rush on and avenge their fallen comrades. But they met an enemy who did not fear them. Standing in the doorway, with Bill Epps at his side, the captain fought for life. His weapon was a long-bladed rapier, the property of Mastone, in the use of which he was an adept, and which he swept from side to side. When he struck out his long arm a shriek of pain was sure to follow. In that cramped space it was impossible for the Indians to advance more than three abreast, and these were so crowded that they had scarcely room to use their weapons.

Bill Epps, holding a heavy hatchet in his hand, ably seconded the efforts of his superior, and the Indians in front would gladly have backed out of a troublesome scrape if their companions in the rear, at present out of dinner, would have permitted it. They crowded their unhappy comrades upon the blade of Austin and the deadly hatchet of Epps, in spite of their efforts to recede. It was the old struggle of the many and the few, like "Haw Hand His Gashers" in the narrow pass. One by one the Indians dropped, while the two brave men stood unwavering, disputing the narrow pass. The masked chief would have pressed his way to the front, but found it impossible, on account of the crowd in the passage.

"Yip! yip! yip!" he cried, over the heads of his diminishing band. "If you kill any of my men, expect no mercy."

"Past praying for, the old man thinks," roared Epps, striking down a long-swing who was pressing them hard. "Call off yer tomahawks or we'll make mincemeat of yer hull party."

The Indians behind began to find that their friends were having trouble, and were making frantic efforts to get forward, but in vain. Seeing that the two leaders were making a determined resistance, the chief called off his men, and they clattered rather hastily out of the passage, followed by the derisive shouts of Hungry Bill.

"Yan! yan! yan! yan! yan!" he yelled. "How'd ye like it? Comin' down us in a trap, ar' we? Hoo! The old man won't stand you. Made it warm for 'em that time, didn't he?"

"Whoa!" said Austin, drawing a long breath. "Hot; I shan't think so. What's the next thing on the programme, I wonder?"

The masked chief again appeared at the opening and called out to Austin and Epps, and Austin responded.

"This is a rough country," said the mask; "why not give up a bit? I'd try a good quarter."

"Thank you," said Austin. "You are very kind, but really we can not feel it in our hearts to take the kind of quarter you will give us."

"Will you not trust to my honor?"

"No, thank you. I have not the slightest faith in your possession of such virtue."

"Then you will not give up?"

"Certainly not."

"Then ask the man who calls himself Marstowe to come forward. I will treat with him."

"By no means," replied Austen. "I am the only one you can treat with."

"Let me ask you a single question. Is Perdita dead?"

"If she is not, it is no fault of yours," said Austen. "And if I ever meet you upon any spot of ground on earth where we can cross swords, I will make you repent that dastardly shot."

"Dastardly!"

"Worse than that. None but a *coward* would aim a ball at the breast of a woman."

"Fool! I meant it for you. But, we have said enough. I give you until daylight to make up your mind what you will do. When light appears, we will have you out of that, if we have to burrow like rats after you."

"Good; you shall have a chance to burrow," said Austen. "I bid you good-night."

The masked chief retired, and for four hours Austen stood guard at the doorway, starting up at every sound, ready to dispute the passage as before. But no assault was made until the light of day began to pour into the opening the Indians had made. Bill Epps, who had been sleeping on the hard earth just behind Austen, started up and rubbed his eyes.

"Any one stirring yet, cap?" he said.

"Not yet. At least I have heard no one. What do you say to preparing a little surprise for our worthy friends?"

"As how?" said Bill.

Austen said something in a low tone, at which Bill laughed and ran off into the passage. In a moment he returned holding his powder-horn in his hand and dropping a train along the ground, taking care to avoid the blood. He had hardly done so when the tramp of many feet announced that the Indians were awake and preparing for the assault. Bill Epps was down upon his knees with a laugh upon his face, lighting a bit of dry punk. He had just succeeded in doing so when the Indians began to drop through the opening, this

time looked by for a five million, so as to meet the defenders upon their own terms.

"Now!" cried Austen.

Bil Eyes dropped the piece of pack upon the end of the trunk. A hissing serpent was seen to run into the passage, and a blinding dust flew up the place. Bill had scattered powder in various places in the passage and let a bomb fire it to the spot where he stood. There was not enough of it to make much of an explosion, but in that close place it was hot to make it comfortable warm for any one who was unfortunate enough to be caught in the trap. Yells of pain and rage arose, and that the fellows did not relish their trapping, and in the midst of the confusion the masked chieftain dashed in and ran up the stairs. The rest followed, but when they reached the first room not a soul was to be seen, and their passage was barred by a strong wooden door, behind which the muzzles of a pair of rifles protruded in the upper corner. The door had not been illiberal during the storm, and had bolted up a strong door calculated to resist an assault for a considerable time.

"Come along," said the muck. "They are prepared for us at every point. Ha!"

A bullet whizzed past and ploughed a long furrow in his shoulder, striking him in the spine and inflicting him almost to death. Dismayed at the power, he gave an order to the Indians to break the cavern in a moment, and the red savages did the work above.

"I am sorry for that muck," said the guide. "We ain't got time to tarry. You see how long the damed door will stand?"

In the interval the Indians prepared, and peeling the bark off his shoulder, the captain saw that they carried in their hands a sort of a small tree, from which they had cut a number of sharp-edged lengths for battle-axes, so that the men could not break them. When they approached the door they began shouting, and then:

"Come on! Come on! Come on! and with a shout for the fight, the Indians rushed upon the door. Captain Austin held his ground, and fought like a lion. Again that

crash came, and the door came down with a loud noise, and over it poured the whole band of St. Regis, or what was left of them, mad, desperate. Both Bill Epis and the captain fought with the fury of despair, but what could they do against so many? They were borne down, bound hand and foot, and would have been slain upon the spot had not the half-breed shouted to the braves to reserve them for a worse fate. The masked chief sprung forward to look for his other prisoners, but nowhere could he see them. Search where he would, he could find no trace of the two for whom he had dared so much. He came back frantic.

"Look you, young man. I have a few words to say to you, and see that you answer them promptly. Where is Perdita; where is the Chevalier Maly, otherwise called Marstowe?"

"How can I tell?" replied the captain, with a light laugh. "Impossible to say."

"You lie, I believe."

"Do you? Impossible to say. Do you know where they are gone, Bill?"

"How should I know?" said Bill, in the same tone. "They ain't here, I reckon."

"I will find a way to open your mouths upon the subject. Drag them out, braves of the St. Regis. We will make them atone for the blood which has been shed."

"You have us in your power, and of course you have the privilege of doing as you please," said Austen. "But no torture you can inflict will avail you. I know what to expect, but I will endure it, for the sake of the sweet girl you would have murdered. Thank God, she is safe from you, wherever may come to me."

"Where is the chief?" demanded a savage, thrusting his painted face close to that of Austen. "Dog of a Yengee, speak. Where is Chenasco, that child of the bad spirit, who has brought sorrow into the St. Regis lodges?"

"You bet he has," said Bill. "Come, capt'in. They can't hurt the gal now. Tell the pizen snake how she got away!"

"You may, if you like."

"Well, I don't mind. They went away in the boat just afore you come, and let us to take care of you. We agreed

that you sh'dn't follow 'em till mornin'. We did our darnedest, didn't we, boss?"

The master chit did not reply, but made a gesture of farewell, and the two prisoners were dragged out into the open air, surrounded by the demons who had taken them, making the air vocal with their cries. Scarcely a man among them who had not a personal wrong to avenge, for the fiendish work which Bell had gotten up had burned many of them, and others had lost personal friends in the struggles of the past week. They tied them to stunted saplings, facing each other, and then the ferocious band began one of those wild scenes which often follow a capture of this kind. They leaped wildly about the captives, uttering a strange chattering, calling the death cry, execrating them in the names of slain relatives and friends.

Bell kept him in an uncomfortable position to the right, following the motions of the savages with his eyes and calling for new acts of violence. He had hoped to find no quarter of which Austen had not thought since Cangahall disappeared as soon as the storm ended.

Bell had not given sufficient credit to the gratitude of the savages. Cangahall had not forgotten them, and while the Indians were beginning new indignities, a like number dashed suddenly from the woods, cut the bonds upon the hands of the captives, and gave them weapons, and then stood up like a rock, to receive the united rush of the determined foes, shouting the war cry of the Oneidas! As the cry sounded over the lake, to the utter surprise of the masked chief, as well as the St. Regis, an answering shout was heard on every side, and a strong band of Oneidas darted from the forest wood, and rushed upon the astounded St. Regis. Taken by surprise, they offered but a feeble resistance. Some were cut down, the balance taken captive. The half-breed was spared. The masked chief, attempting to escape, was overtaken by a hatchet, desperately wielded. When the chief was overtaken he lay upon his side close to the water's edge, breathing hard.

"Is it—Cangahall? Mary and his daughter come to me," he said, faintly. "That is, if they are here."

"I will call them," replied Austen, who heard the request.

The old man who had made the island his home came forward, followed by Perdita.

"Take off my mask," said the wounded man, in the same weak tone. "It has served its purpose, and can do no more."

Bill Epps cut the leatheren strips which bound the mask behind, and pulled it off. Marly looked into the face, and staggered back with a look of horror.

"God of Heaven; my nephew, Edward!"

"Yes, Chevalier Marly, Marquis of Duckay, I am your nephew, Edward. What does it matter? I followed you for the sake of the inheritance which, while you were not known to be dead, rested in abeyance since my uncle's death. I sought you out in Montreal, but you escaped me. I heard of the recluse who lived here alone, and I sought you out. My villainy has recoil'd upon my own head. If you were dead, I could claim the title."

"I thought it might be you," said Marly, sadly. "But, this distortion of your shoulder deceived me."

"A part of my disguise. I would have married Perdita, and gained the place I sought in France. That failing, I would have slain you both. My power among the St. Regis enabled me to collect this band, but I have failed. I die as I have lived: a desperate end to a desperate life. You may yet have trouble before you sit in your castle at Duckay."

With these words, he gasped and died. Marly yet knelt beside him, looking down into the set face, which showed the marks of a riotous life, though proud and noble.

Marly looked up at last. "My friends," he said, "you marvel to see me here. I will explain. My brother was Marquis of Duckay, and hated me. For a crime of which I was never guilty I was forced to leave France, and make my home in America. With that crime unexplained I can not return, and it was the knowledge of this which gave Edward the power over me. He was an Indian agent of the Governor of Canada, a bold, hardy man. He held the proofs of my innocence, but where they are I do not know."

"Search him," said Austen.

Bill Epps passed his hand over the clothing of the dead man until he felt something under the coat upon his breast. He opened the coat, and did not find it, but sewed to the inside of

his waist. It was a leather pocket-book, which Bill cut loose and gave to Marly, who opened it with trembling hands. He saw within a folded paper, which he opened hastily. His eye brightened as he ran his gaze over the contents.

"Good man," said he, "my avowed crime was political. With this in my hand I can face my sovereign and demand my birthright at his hands. No more the nameless outcast, flitting from a shadow, but as Alphonse Marly, Marquis of Duclay, I greet you. Perdition, night is over; day has come to us!"

She threw her self upon his neck, weeping for joy. It was a drowsy moment; even the stern Indian was touched, and Aspinwall lay his head. He was glad they were happy, glad of her happiness, although it set up such a bar between them.

"Friends all," entered Marly. "I am so bare of thanks that I can hardly speak to you. But the chief is the man to whom you owe your lives. When we thought he had us from us, he had gone to bring us all. He knew that his men would be at a certain place at the time he could reach it, and they had come. He left you without explanation, and followed. We met them on the lake, and were captured, and then sent by our enemies. What was our joy to hear the words of a vision of Cleopatra. Go I fortunately fled us, and followed the Indians who spurn the eastern end of the island, and made their way inland. Spies were sent out, who came back to report you still to the stake awaiting torture. The rest you know."

Under cover of darkness they bade farewell to the Indian, who they had known and passed away from the wild valley of the Madan. Bill took his gun and went after him, which he did with a curse. They had nearly passed him in the dark, with the gun in his hand, when they called him back. "It is for you," said Bill, "to kill him." They had been hunting deer all day, and when they called him back, he was loaded with game.

Bill had a long walk home from Albany, and when he came up the steps of the wharf, they had prepared a sumptuous meal for him, and they had piled

much, standing on the deck, waving her handkerchief to them. Bill waved his mangy cap with one hand, while he covered his eyes with the other.

"Good-by, little gal," he muttered. "The sweetest woman on the universal airth. Come, Chenango."

As the packet rounded the headland, the forest men turned and went back to their woodland life, to stay until the Master called them.

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God gave us men, We are not created equal,	Wings of the Indians,
The sun, the moon, the stars, can be good or evil,	A Free Land's paper,
The water and the air, can be good or evil, a few,	An emblem book of Am.
Stay where you belong, Is nothing a misfortune,	Visions of war, [liberty
I am not a hawk, Parrot,	Laws, Settlers,
Victor's day victory,	The greatness of our America,
She is from us now, Not good & evil, [no,	A dream,
Andpiration to victory The greatest battle field,	The sun, The people, a danger,
The route to happiness, Plan for the horizon,	Power of America, etc. It is clear to me,
	The road,
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Friendship,	W. and Lamb,	A sepctory,	On St. George's
The earth,	Learn to live,	Cold corners, infant,	A smile,
The sun, urthme,	Frog-swing frabling,	The great tree deserves	Concordia,
The fiery atmosphere,	Snowman,	My dream, [another,	Flower-pot to soap,
What was learned,	Country and town mice,	Learn,	Never see us,
Friends,	W. and W. Hall,	Not never use tobacco,	Me,
The horse,	He,	A mosaic,	A hundred years to
The mare in the grass,	Hot-chester,	The old bachelor,	The madman and his
The cattle in the field,	Ice-cream,	Prayer to light,	Little sermons, [razor,
Friendship's secret,	Indoor sports,	Little Jim,	Snuffles on electricity,
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Friendship's secret,	Old man poor Tom,	Never,	Do thy duty, do it well,
Friendship's secret,	Old Uncle Christmas,	One self taught,	Little pose,
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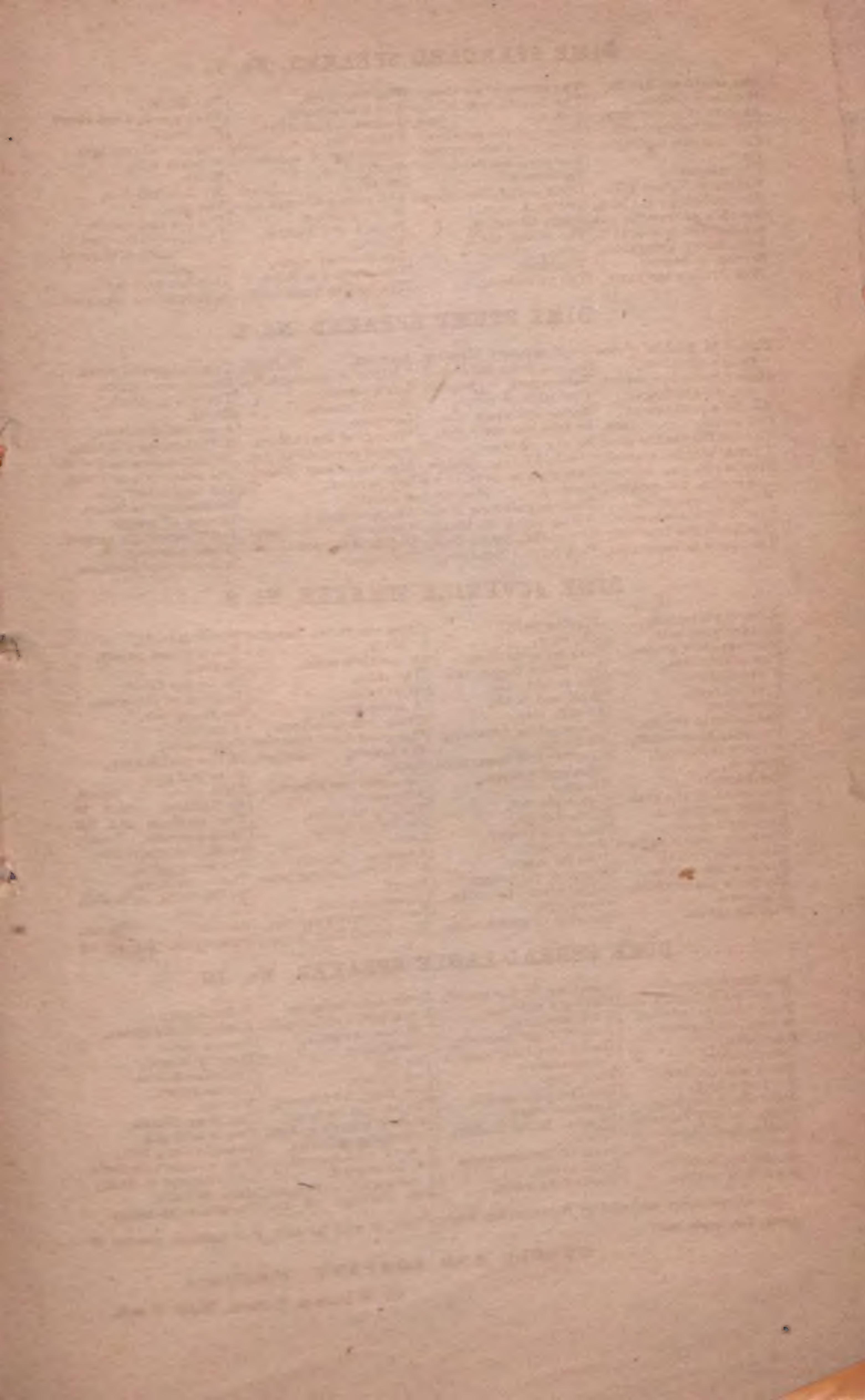
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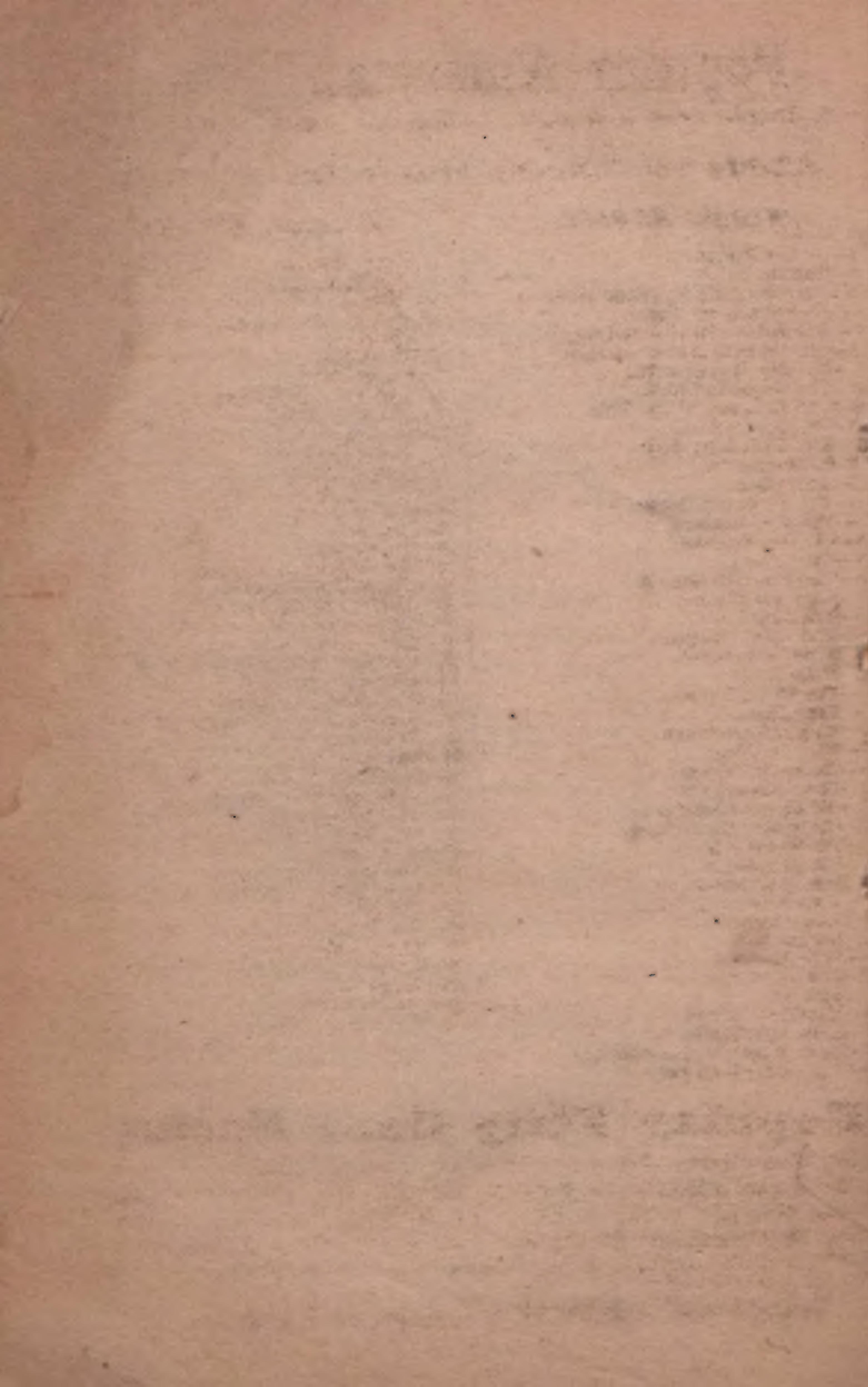
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